NEWS / A2

Melo Commission wraps up probe; to submit report early January

BUSiNESS / B1

Income tax collection falls short of target; BIR blames interests' decline

ACROSS / A18

70 Pangasinan fishermen missing after huge waves sweep fishing boats near Spratleys

"Lahat tutulayin,
dagat man ang pagitan."
See pullout

'Don't romanticize OFWs to minimize social costs'

By Jerome Aning

ROMANTICIZING OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKers as "modern-day heroes" should be stopped if the government wants to minimize the social costs of employment abroad, according to the Department of Labor and Employment's head researcher.

"Overseas workers go abroad for personal

DON'T/ A7

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Wednesday, December 20, 2006 ★★ 8 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 12 P18 website: inquirer.net

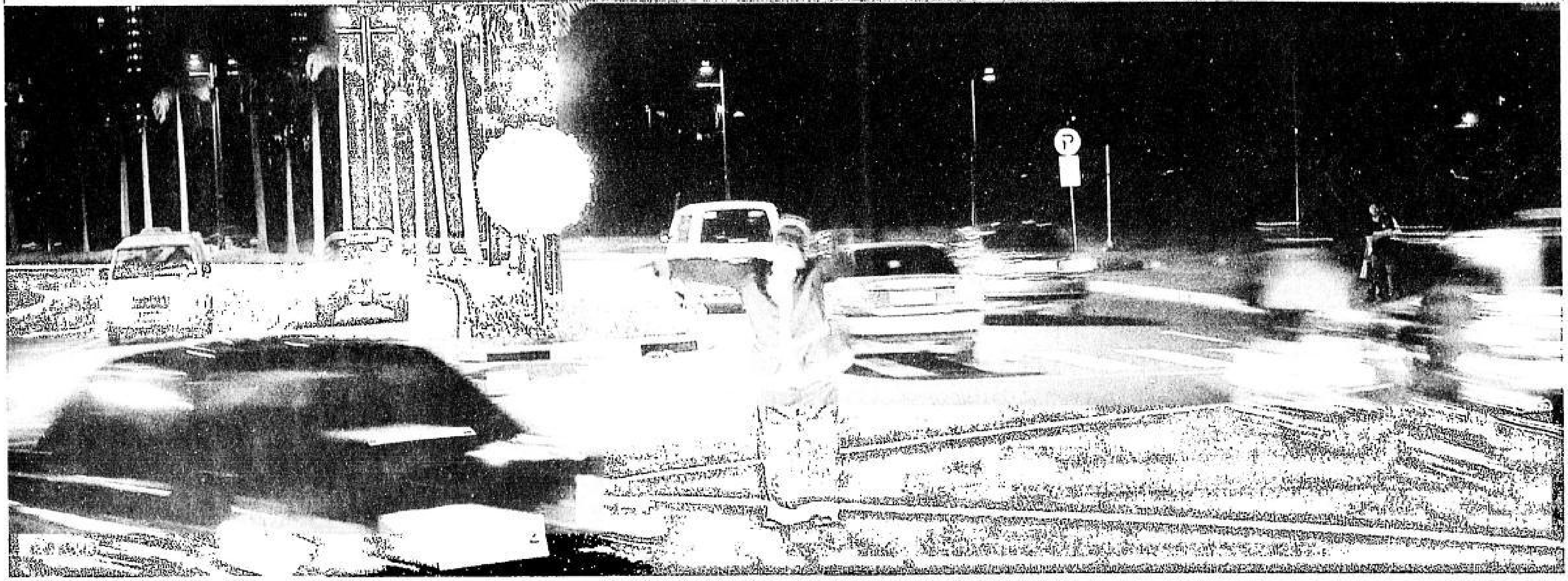
Airlines' wish for all seasons: Quiet at Naia

By Nikko Dizon

SILENT NIGHT
BUONG ARAW!

AIRLINE COMPANIES are still hopeful that silence will soon reign at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia)—all in the name of tranquility for harried passengers.

AIRLINES'/ A20



JM GUIAO PUNZALAN

TRAFFIC-STOPPING SANTA NAMED NOEL: All dressed up like the season's most popular character, S/Sgt. Noel Quilatan of the Bonifacio Global security services is a show-stopper as he directs traffic daily at the Mckinley intersection at the Fort from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. and from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

GMA talks Cha-cha anew

Defensor: It could lead to perdition

By Christine O. Avendaño
and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

DESPITE A SERIES OF SETbacks, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday vowed before an international gathering to pursue with vigor her goal of overhauling the country's Constitution.

But a key presidential adviser, Chief of Staff Michael Defensor, warned that carrying out such a plan before the May 2007 elections would be courting disaster. He said the Cabinet's job was to protect Ms Arroyo from going "down the road of perdition."

Ms Arroyo declared her resolve to push ahead with Charter change in a keynote address at the 40th anniversary of the Asian Development Bank in Mandaluyong City—but she acknowledged there was need for "a unified national consensus on the means and timetable." *(See related story on Page A2.)*

She did not elaborate but her remarks came in the wake of successive defeats she and her allies had suffered in their bid to amend the Constitution, either through a signature collection drive called a people's initiative, or through a constituent assembly (Con-ass), where members of Congress themselves would tinker with the Charter.

GMA TALKS/ A20

It's Christmas in jail for Smith; CA nixes TRO

By Armand N. Nocum
and Tarra V. Quismundo

AMERICAN RAPE CONVICT LANCE Cpl. Daniel Smith will spend Christmas at the Makati City Jail with the Court of Appeals rejecting for now his petition for a temporary restraining order on his commitment at the facility.

In a resolution dated Dec. 18, Associate Justice Apolinario Bruselas Jr. of the appellate court's special 11th division said the issuance of a TRO was "not warranted at this time" because the commitment order issued by Makati Judge Benjamin Pozon had already been enforced.

Bruselas said a TRO would in effect declare Pozon's order irregular without the benefit of a trial on the merits of the case.

The appellate court also downplayed Smith's claim that he stood to suffer serious and irreparable injury if he continued to stay at the city jail pending the determination of his petition.

"A [TRO] may not be granted at this time because the meat of the herein petition precisely involves a determination of the regularity of the act of respondent in directing confinement in the MCJ. The order has been imple-

IT'S CHRISTMAS/ A20

Christmas lights blinking again in Samar, Leyte; Albay, Sorsogon soon

By Ven S. Labro
Inquirer Visayas
and Bobby Q. Labalan
Inquirer Southern Luzon

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS ARE NOW blinking in Samar and Leyte, days after Typhoon "Seniang" battered the islands and toppled electric posts and transmission lines.

But twinkling Christmas lights in Albay and Sorsogon will have to wait until tomorrow, according to National Transmission Corp. (Transco).

Supertyphoon "Reming" toppled electric posts and transmission lines in Albay, Sorsogon and Catanduanes on Nov. 30, leaving these provinces without power.

Transco has energized Leyte and Samar since Dec. 16 after it restored all power transmission structures.

Edna Legaspina, corporate communications officer of Transco in Ormoc City, said Seniang had toppled 40 transmission structures in Samar and Leyte.

Legaspina placed the damage to

CHRISTMAS/ A13

Stories from my hometown after 'Reming'

By Jocelyn R. Uy

(Editor's Note: This account is based on notes written on Dec. 9-12.)

LEGAZPI CITY—THE WORKFORCE begins to head home as the last rays of the sun cast a soft light on Mount Mayon and the sky gradually turns dark.

Still without electricity more than a week after Supertyphoon "Reming" descended with fury and killed a thousand people, the city's business district is swiftly emptied starting at 6 p.m. Within minutes there is only a pall of gloom.

The night is young but for my hometown, another day has ended too soon.

In our small neighborhood, there are no children in the streets singing Christmas carols. There is only a chorus of whirring generator sets in the few households that can afford them.

But the nights are actually bearable. In the bright light of day, the devastation and misery left by Reming are on full view—a sad, sordid spectacle.

I am home for a brief stay, and the aftermath of the typhoon is still raw and plain to see even during a short walk to

STORIES/ A12

Hard-up guard returns ₱500,000

By DJ Yap

WERE HE A MAN WITHOUT A CONscience, George Bacod, a security guard at a Quezon City condominium, would be preparing a generous Christmas feast for his family by now.

All his monetary troubles would have been gone: The minimum wage-earner would finally be able to send his two boys to school, and he would even be able to afford a better place for them than their rented room in Angono, Rizal.

But Bacod, 27, believes in karma.

When a bundle of peso and dollar bills amounting to more than P500,000 fell on his lap one November evening, he did only what he believed a decent man should do: He returned it to the owner.

HARD-UP/ A21

THE BEREAVED children and grandchildren of Bersamin accompany his body to the House of Representatives.

JOAN BONDOC

Ex-soldier detained over solon's slay

By Philip C. Tubeza
and Armand N. Nocum

SPEAKER JOSE DE VENECIA YESTERday said a 40-year-old former soldier had been detained for questioning in the murder of Abra Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr. and his bodyguard even as one official speculated it could possibly involve communists out to avenge the slayings of leftist militants.

De Venecia said during Bersamin's necrological service that the man armed with a pistol had been arrested in the Ilocos region and was undergoing investigation in Manila. He had no further information but said he had also learned that a P200,000 "down payment" had been given for the kill.

De Venecia announced that the

EX-SOLDIER/ A12

RAFFY LERMA

HONORS FOR A FALLEN COLLEAGUE: The remains of Abra Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr. are brought to the House of Representatives for necrological service and Mass.

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Southern Luzon and Visayas will be cloudy with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms while Northern and Central Luzon will have mostly cloudy skies with light rains. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshower and thunderstorms.

COMPILED BY: KATE PEDROSO, INQUIRER RESEARCH/12/19/06 SOURCE PAGASA

Metro Manila	Cloudy with Rains	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Cloudy with Rains	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Partly Cloudy

Second FRONTPAGE

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Looks like reenacted budget again for '07

By Philip C. Tubeza and TJ Burgonio

THE GOVERNMENT MAY AGAIN HAVE TO OPerate on a rolled-over budget next year with Congress expected to fail to pass the P1.126-trillion proposed 2007 budget before it goes on holiday recess later this week.

"Despite our frenzied efforts to avoid another reenactment, I am very sorry Congress could not give the nation a reason to be merry on Christmas or to be prosperous in the New Year," said Albay Rep. Joey Salceda, chair of the House appropriations committee.

Salceda and Sen. Franklin Drilon, his Senate counterpart, believe there may not be enough time to pass the measure by Thursday after the bicameral conference committee failed to break a deadlock and decided to suspend the conference indefinitely last night.

The government may have to run on the reenacted P907.56-billion 2005 national budget "for the second time" at least for the early part of next year, said Salceda.

He said Congress may even have to pass a supplemental budget of P5.5 billion for the May 2007 national elections in a "worst-case scenario." Another P2.2 billion would be needed for the barangay elections.

Salceda said that despite goodwill on both sides, which achieved a consensus on the first 98 percent of the proposed budget, the two chambers could not bridge their differences.

The major sticking point was the issue of the P4.7-billion allocation for the Department of Education's food-for-schools program, he said.

Salceda said another contentious issue was the transfer of P400 million worth of intelligence funds for the Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Task Force that the Senate wanted transferred to the Department of National Defense.

The House wanted the P4.7 billion retained as originally proposed by Malacañang, but the Senate panel insisted the funds be realigned to fund the construction of 8,000 classrooms and the hiring of 6,000 additional teachers.

In the budget she submitted to Congress, President Macapagal-Arroyo allotted funds for the construction of only 12,000 classrooms and the hiring of 10,000 teachers.

The DepEd needs at least 20,000 classrooms and 16,000 teachers in 2007.

"We thought we could better utilize these funds to close the gap in the shortage of school buildings and teachers," Drilon said.

Salceda said that a reenacted budget would "threaten" the economic growth and poverty reduction targets of the government.

"The country suffers because we would have a reenacted 2005 budget for the second time. There would also be no tax rebates. Certainly, growth targets are threatened," Salceda said.

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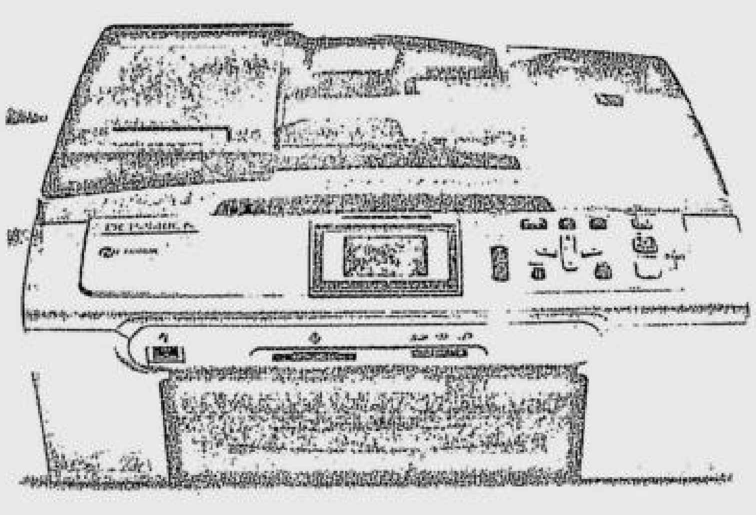

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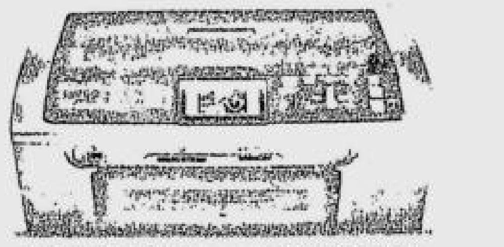

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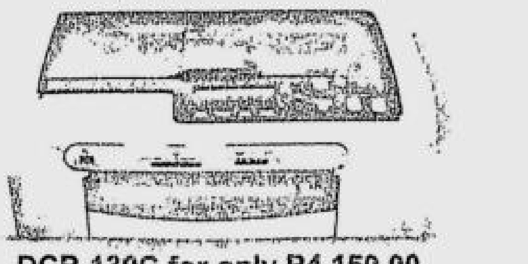

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Melo panel completes probe; to let Gloria release results

A COMMISSION CREATED BY THE PHILIPpine government to probe hundreds of killings and disappearances of militant workers and reporters has completed its investigation and will submit its report to President Macapagal-Arroyo in early January.

But Jose Melo, the head of the panel said on Tuesday it would be up to Arroyo to make public the commission's findings.

"We have completed our report and collated all the data," the retired Supreme Court justice told a local radio station, adding the five-member commission had thoroughly "analyzed and investigated the cases of extrajudicial killings."

Melo said his panel relied mainly on reports from the military and police, which indicated the murders could be part of an internal purge by the communist New People's Army (NPA).

Local rights groups have said more than 700 leftist activists and reporters have been killed since Arroyo took power in 2001. But the police say the real figure is 136 and accuse activists of exaggerating the figures to undermine the government.

Arroyo's administration has been criticized for failing to stop an upsurge in the killings—usually carried out by masked men on motorbikes—since the start of the year.

Amnesty International said in August the security forces could be involved.

Families of murdered leftist activists and reporters have largely boycotted the inquiry saying it was designed to clear the military and police of any blame.

US-based Human Rights Watch said earlier this year that the inquiry had made little visible progress amid a climate of fear.

Even wealthy plantation owners in the central Philippines criticized the inquiry because they were not invited to attend public hearings last month on Negros Island, a hotbed of rebel fighting due to the fertile sugarcane land.

Roger Reyes, a lawyer for one of the Negros landowners, said the commission heard only from farmers, and complained that the inquiry was created to appease Arroyo's political opponents.

The government created the commission in August 2006 due to mounting international pressure to stop the killings, which have continued on a monthly and sometimes weekly basis.

"The commission was not created to solve crimes," Melo said in earlier statements. "We're here to find out why killings are going on and who probably are the groups responsible."

Reuters

ADB grants RP $653-M loan; GMA shows gratitude for aid

By Christine O. Avendaño

THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK YESTERday extended $653 million in loans and grants to the Philippines, mostly to fund the development of the country's power and financial sectors.

The loans and grants were turned over to President Macapagal-Arroyo during the 40th anniversary program of the Manila-based bank where she was the keynote speaker.

Ms Arroyo thanked the "premier Asian development institution" for the assistance which she said was "the largest ADB assistance in eight years" as well as for recognizing the economic turnaround of the country, among other things.

"Thank you ADB for agreeing that 'the Philippines is back' during the media briefing of the $650 million power sector development program loan," said the Chief Executive.

The ADB assistance consists of $450 million for the Power Sector Development Program (which aims to help stabilize the power situation in the country) and $200 million for the Financial Market Regulation and Intermediation Program" (which aims to develop a more efficient financial sector).

Ms Arroyo also thanked the ADB for extending a $3 million grant to Southern Leyte to help the province recover from the deadly February 2006 landslides that buried more than 1,000 people in a single village.

"Thank you for the assistance in the study of the vulnerable areas in the Philippines which strengthens our hand in overall disaster management," the President said.

Ms Arroyo also thanked the ADB for its "positive response" to the appeal of the Philippines and other developing countries to lower its commitment fees. The fee is imposed on a borrowing country by a lending institution and is usually a certain percentage of the undisbursed amount of the loan.

"We also hope that ADB will act positively on the request of the Philippines and other DMCs to ease the bank's conditionalities," she said.

This will provide developing countries better opportunities to enjoy the benefits of the bank's assistance, according to the President.

Thanking as well the ADB for issuing statements supporting her government's reform programs, President Arroyo said she would continue to work on other reforms like curbing corruption in the country.

This was being done, she said, by implementing Executive Order No. 564 which created a task force to monitor the infrastructure projects she announced during her State of the Nation Address this year.

Her administration was also using the $20 million assistance from the US Millenium Challenge Account to curb corruption, she said.

"I thank you ADB for your support in all the reforms that we have tried to do across the broad spectrum of our needed reforms—fiscal reforms, financial reforms, power sector reforms and governance reforms," she said.

"We hope that the donor community appreciates the efforts of our government for the needed reforms even with the difficulties that they face," the President said.

China completes Asean cast

By Volt Contreras

WITH CHINA ALSO SENDING WORD THAT IT is coming, officials in charge of ensuring "complete attendance" at the rescheduled 12th Asean Summit in Cebu maintain there is no question that the regional meeting will push through this January.

"There's no more doubt about that; we cannot not proceed," Ambassador Vic Lecaros, the summit spokesperson, told the INQUIRER early last night.

"*Hindi na pinag-uusapan kung tuloy o hindi*(We're not talking about whether it's pushing through or not).We are all heading towards complete attendance," said Lecaros, who also serves as the country's envoy to Malaysia.

Another official involved in the preparations said China had also confirmed its participation in the Asean summit and in the adjunct East Asia Summit.

The official asked not to be identified to defer to the Department of Foreign Affairs' formal announcements—most likely to be made today—regarding the other guest nations.

On Monday, DFA Assistant Secretary Luis Cruz said the agency was expected to receive yesterday formal responses from all Asean members and its six dialogue partners on the proposed new dates of the summit, Jan. 13 to 15, 2007.

Cruz reported that South Korea had already confirmedits attendance. Japan and all the other nine members of Asean had also assured the host of their presence.

Asean is composed of the Philippines, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Burma (Myanmar), Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Its dialogue partners expected at the Cebu meetings include China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand.

Witness overhears Jaworski bomb plotters

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

A WITNESS HAS FINALLY SURfaced to confirm that the bombing of the Innova van of Pasig City Rep. Robert "Dodot" Jaworski in Pasig City last week was not accidental but was deliberately planned.

The witness, a 26-year-old native of Batangas, said he stumbled on the slay plot while waiting for a ride along Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City where he overheard an unidentified man talking on his cell phone and asking if Jaworski was already dead.

At about the same time, Jaworski had just jumped out of his minivan in Pasig City before it blew up and engulfed in flames.

Police yesterday released sketches of two suspects who appeared to be involved in the bombing based on the testimony of witness.

Eastern Criminal Investigation and Detection Group chief Supt. Edgardo Wycoco told the INQUIRER the witness voluntarily went to Jaworski's office at the Batasang Pambansa on Monday to narrate what he had heard and saw on the day of the attack, which he believed might have had something to do with the bombing.

Wycoco said the first suspect was between 28-32 years old, about 5'6" tall and had a mole on his left cheek. The second suspect was about 33 years old, about 5'6" tall and had long curly hair.

The first suspect spoke in Filipino while the second suspect had a Visayan accent, the witness told Wycoco.

"Kumusta na ang sasakyan ni Congressman Dodot? Buhay ba siya o patay (How's the vehicle of Congressman Dodot? Is he alive or dead)?" the witness allegedly heard the first suspect saying while speaking on a cell phone.

The witness told police he was on Commonwealth Avenue near the pedestrian overpass in front of the St. Peter Parish when he heard the conversation about 1:50 p.m. on Dec. 12, just minutes after the minivan exploded on C5 Road in Pasig City.

The man paused for a few seconds and later sighed, apparently after learning that Jaworski had survived the blast: *"Patay. Lagot tayo ngayon!"*

The man on the cell phone allegedly had a companion, who suddenly glared at the witness who was holding a camera.

The second suspect took the witness' identification card and said: *"Ano ka ba, espiya? Baka gusto mo mamatay rin* (Are you a spy? Maybe you want to die, too)."

The witness said he pleaded for his life, assuring the two suspects that he did not know what they were talking about.

He said the second suspect later gave back his camera and identification card. Then the witness just walked away.

The witness had gone to the Batasang Pambansa that day to apply for a job. He was told to just fax the requirements and was on his way home when he overheard the conversation.

Cayetano brings up Jose Pidal acc't at hearing

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE GHOST OF JOSE PIDAL WAS RESURrected yesterday during the House ethics committee hearing on the expulsion case filed by members of the First Family against Taguig-Pateros Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano.

Jose Pidal was the fictitious name on a local bank account that allegedly contained P200 million in political campaign contributions for President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Cayetano, who earlier claimed the First Family also had a German bank account containing millions of dollars, cross-examined the President's son, Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo, for nearly an hour on his familiarity with the details of the controversial Jose Pidal account.

"We want to show that there is a trend here to hide their accounts," Cayetano said.

The Arroyos had filed an expulsion case against Cayetano after the German bank he implicated, HypoVereinsbank, certified that no member of the First Family maintained an account with them.

But Cayetano has not yet accepted defeat. The young congressman noted that during the Jose Pidal controversy, the Arroyos initially claimed that they did not maintain such an account and even presented a certification to that effect. "However, the bank later disclosed that there was such an account but it had already been closed," Cayetano said.

The lawmaker insisted that the documentary evidence submitted by the Arroyos—including the HypoVereinsbank certification—still needed to be authenticated.

The Arroyo camp, however, accused Cayetano of stonewalling. The First Gentleman said Cayetano's questions about the Jose Pidal issue were "irrelevant and immaterial."

"My golly, we've been here sitting and waiting for him to cross-examine (but) everything he said here is all dilatory. He has nothing to offer.

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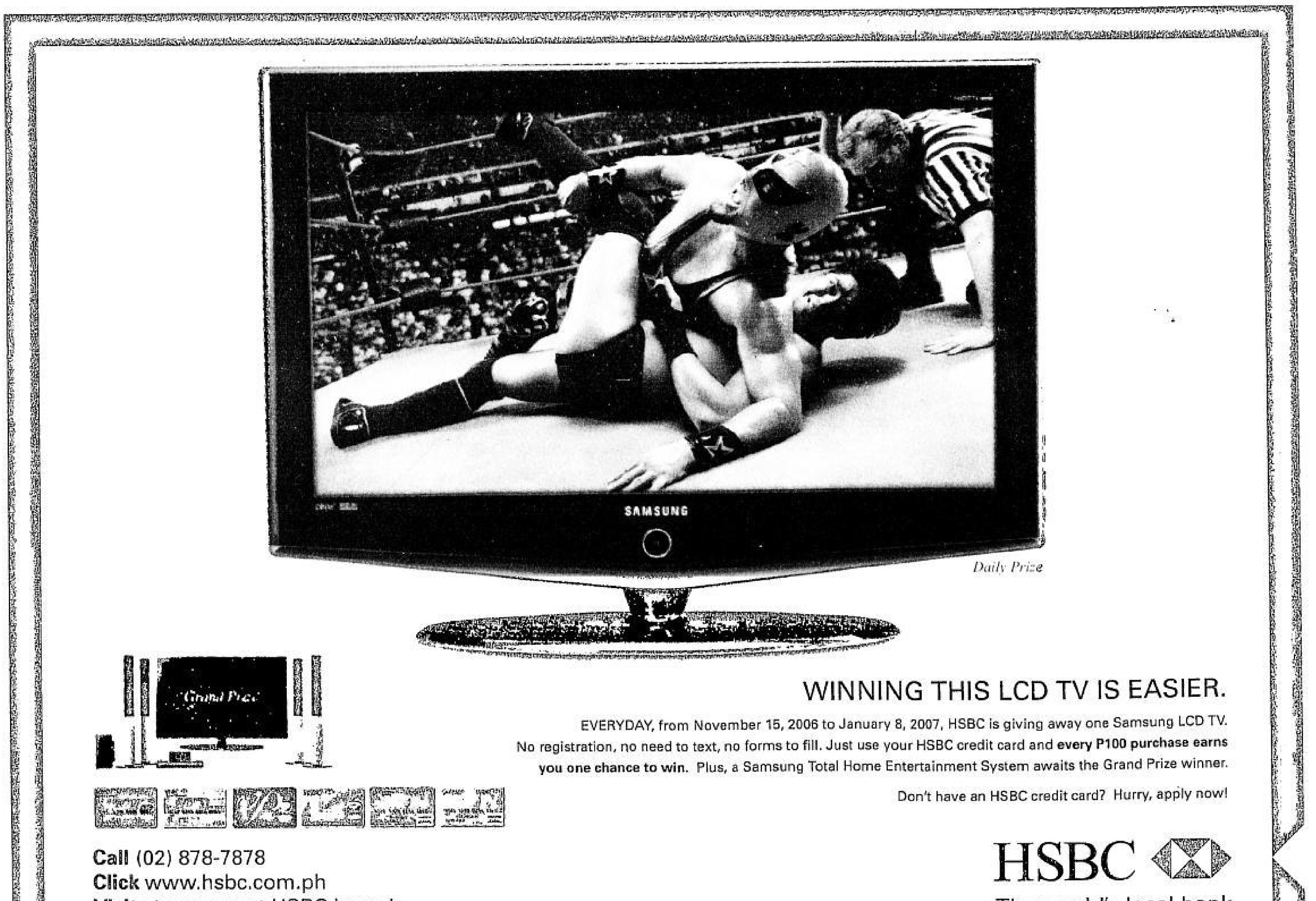

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Mining seen to bring $1B more into RP

THE PHILIPPINES IS LIKELY to attract an additional $1 billion in mining investments in the next two years as foreign players remain keen on either reopening or developing new seams, a top industry official said yesterday.

Benjamin Philip Romualdez, president of the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines, said his projections were on top of the $514 million already invested, mainly by foreign firms, in 24 projects identified as high priority by the government since 2004.

Unexplored gold

The Philippines, which the government claims has $1 trillion worth of unexplored gold, copper and nickel, has been promoting these projects, arguing that they need funding of at least $6.5 billion.

Romualdez told reporters. that the mining sector could eventually rival overseas remittances by Filipino workers for its economic contribution to the Philippines.

"I personally feel that if we were to operate the identified mines, the sector could rival the OFW (overseas Filipino workers) remittances," he said.

Overseas workers sent home $10.7 billion in 2005, equivalent to about 10 percent of gross domestic product.

Not a pipe dream

In contrast, the Philippine minerals sector produced P50 billion worth of metals in 2005.

"This is not a pipe dream," Romualdez said. "All the big boys are back in the Philippines."

Big foreign firms that have either taken stakes or have expressed interest in investing in the country include Swiss-based miner Xstrata Pld, Anglo American Pld., Rio Tinto and BHP Billiton.

Priority projects

Romualdez said that of the 24 priority projects being promoted by the government, five are already in operation, two are under construction, while eight are in their final feasibility and financing stages.

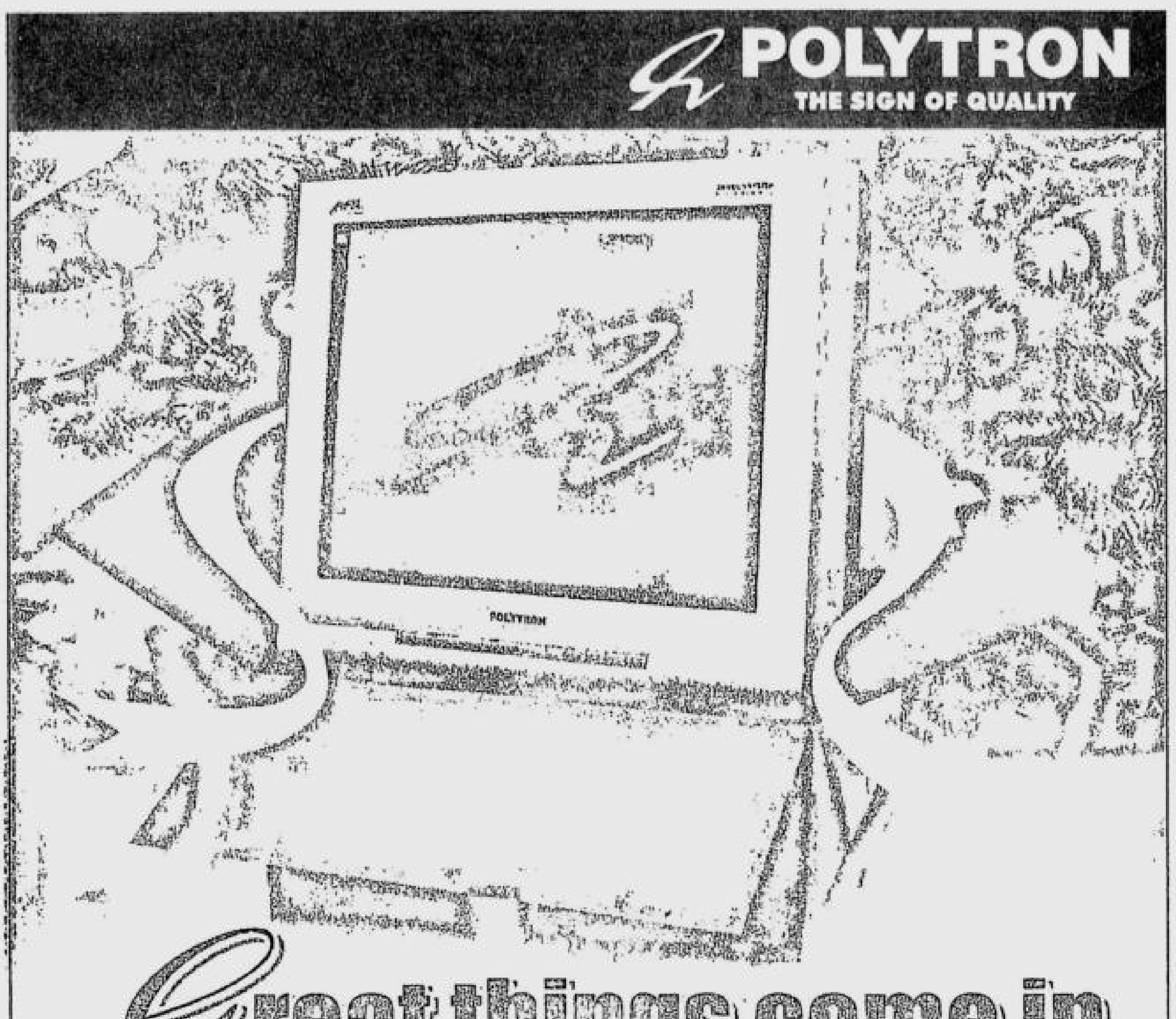
He said fresh investments in the next two years will include a $285 million expansion of a Japanese-owned nickel refinery in Palawan and the $171 million needed to restart Atlas Consolidated Mining and Development Corp.'s copper mine in Cebu.

'Black eye'

Romualdez said two cyanide spills at a copper mine belonging to Australian firm Lafayette Mining Ltd. last year "caused a black eye in the industry's advocacy for responsible mining."

He said the accident also put a six-month brake on the industry as environmentalists and the Catholic Church intensified their opposition against foreign investments in local mines.

Reuters



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Corrections

IN THE DEC. 15 ISSUE, a story on Page A7—"2 DA execs charged as Esperat slay brains"—misstated the rank of Avelino Razon Jr. at the Philippine National Police. Razon is a PNP deputy director general—not director general.

* * *

IN THE DEC. 16 ISSUE, a story on Page A19—"Peasant leader, 3 others survive attack by gunmen"—contained a number of inaccuracies. Vicente Barrios, who survived an ambush in Compostela on Dec. 15, is chair of the United Workers of Suyapa—not Suyafa—Farms. Barrios is a labor leader—not a peasant leader. Moreover, Barrios and three of his companions were riding on motorcycles—not walking—on their way to work when they were ambushed. Fresh Banana Agricultural Corp. is now owned by AJMR/Sumitomo Fruits Corp. (Sumifru)—not the Andres Soriano Group.

* * *

IN THE DEC. 18 ISSUE, two front-page stories—"Bishops push own Cha-cha" and "A rally with no banners, streamers"—misspelled the name of one of the party-list representatives who was present at the Church-led prayer rally at the Luneta on Sunday. The party-list representative's name is Risa—not Riza or Rissa—Hontiveros-Baraquel.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City, fax Nos. 897-47-93/94; e-mail address: daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Lorna Kalaw Tirol, readers' advocate, e-mail address: readersadvocate@inquirer.com. ph or fax Nos. 897-47-93/94, Attn: Readers Advocate. Her phone number is 897-8808 Local 342.

A. Felipe; 83

ANICETA MELO-FELIPE, MOTHer of Sunday Inquirer Magazine editorial assistant Sharon Felipe, died on Monday at the age of 83.

She is survived by her husband Manuel, children James, Caroline and Sharon, daughter-in-law Malu, granddaughter Emily, brothers Romulo and Celedonio, nieces, nephews, and grandchildren.

Her remains lie at the Sapinoso Grand Chapel, Col. J. Elises St., Imus, Cavite. Interment will be on Dec. 21 at the Melda Memorial Park, Toclong I, Imus, Cavite, after the 2 p.m. memorial service at the Imus Unida Church.

M. Colores; 105

MATEO A. COLORES OF LIBmanan, Camarines Sur, died yesterday of natural causes. He was 105.

He is survived by his children Adelina and Charlemagne, daughter-in-law Lourdes, grandchildren and great grandchildren. His wife Fidela died 20 years ago.

Cremation is set for 3 p.m. today at the Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, December 20, 2006
3rd Week of Advent

1st Reading: Is 7:10-14
Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth. He was sent to a young virgin who was betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the family of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

The angel came to her and said, 'Rejoice full of grace, the Lord is with you." Mary was troubled at these words, wondering what this greeting could mean.

But the angel said, "Do not fear, Mary, for God has looked kindly on you. You shall conceive and bear a son and you shall call him Jesus. He will be great and shall rightly be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the kingdom of David, his ancestor; he will rule over the people of Jacob forever and his reign shall have no end.

Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be if I am a virgin?" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the holy child to be born shall be called Son of God. Even your relative Elizabeth is expecting a son in her old age, although she was unable to have a child, and she is now in her sixth month. With God nothing is impossible."

Then Mary said, "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me as you have said." And the angel left her.

Commentary

An old story: Isaiah comes to Ahaz and tells him to ask for a sign from God. But he doesn't want one—he's intent on disobeying God and seeking alliances with other nations. But he will get one anyway—a young woman conceiving a child that will be the presence of God with his people—Emmanuel. The stories repeat themselves, but with God asking permission: Gabriel comes to Myriam blessing her and asking that she bear a child on behalf of her people who will be Son of the Most High, conceived by the Spirit, and she will be overshadowed by God. Yes, she responds in obedience to the Word of God.

God wants to be born in us this year. Are we saying Yes?

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Every Makati fireworks blast for benefit of typhoon victims

By Tarra V. Quismundo

FOR EVERY MINUTE that colorful fireworks light up the skies of the country's financial capital on New Year's Eve, a family in typhoon-stricken Bicol and the Visayas will be assured a decent meal.

The twenty-minute fireworks display to welcome 2007 in Makati would benefit typhoon victims hundreds of kilometers away, as the city government has turned the event into a fundraiser for victims of Supertyphoon "Reming" and Typhoon "Seniang."

"The Makati New Year's Eve countdown is an opportunity for us to show that we Filipinos can count on each other in times of need. While there were incidents in 2006 that brought despair, there are more reasons to hope for a better year ahead," said Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay in a statement.

Initiated by the mayor, the New Year's Eve fundraiser aims to raise as much money as possible from Makati's business establishments and individuals who will attend the six-hour program at the corner of Ayala Avenue and Paseo de Roxas on Dec. 31.

"The message of the program is, we welcome 2007 with hope," said Joey Salgado, chief of the Makati Information and Community Relations Department.

"Before the typhoons, we had been getting sponsors for the event. But because of the devastation the typhoons caused, the mayor decided that the corporate sponsorship we collect should go to the victims of the typhoons," Salgado told the INQUIRER.

At the Clark Special Economic Zone in Pampanga, Sutherland Global Services, a multinational business process outsourcing provider, on Tuesday contributed P2.5 million to the government's relief efforts for victims of Typhoon Reming.

Dilip Vellodi, Sutherland founder and chair, handed the check to President Macapagal-Arroyo, who inaugurated the firm's facilities at the economic zone.

Speaking to reporters before Ms Arroyo's arrival, Vellodi said Sutherland's 15,000 employees in 18 delivery centers worldwide, including 2,000 from Clark, contributed the amount through the company's "Care 2 Give" program.

In Makati, "the mayor saw the effects of the typhoon and he thought it would be a nice gesture to help them out. Traditionally, the New Year's Eve countdown is all about merrymaking. But why not make it an occasion where we could remember the victims of the typhoon?" said Salgado.

Supertyphoon Reming displaced hundreds of thousands of families in Bicol, while Seniang devastated parts of the Visayas, crippling the bustling tourist island of Boracay in Aklan.

Besides corporate sponsorship, Makati aims to source funds from revelers at the New Year's Eve program, where the country's top bands will hold a concert.

The free concert will feature top acts Imago, Itchyworms, 6-Cycle Mind, Rocksteddy, Sandwich, Grupong Pendong and Jeazel Grutas Band. Street magician Eric Mana will also perform. *With Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon*

VERY YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

Coffee keeps these boys awake at night as they sell gift wrappers in Baguio City to raise money for gifts this Christmas. Some of the boys belong to the Islamic faith, but Christmas is Christmas to the very young. VINCENT CABREZA / NORTHERN LUZON

Cold front saves RP from another storm

By Norman Bordadora

THE COLD AIR MASS BROUGHT BY THE northeast monsoon and the cold front north of the archipelago proved too much for tropical storm "Tomas."

The brewing storm had lost its energy and by 2 p.m. yesterday, it was a shallow low pressure area estimated to be 940 kilometers east of Luzon, based on satellite and surface data.

"The cold air mass is huge. It's like a river and Tomas was like a small leaf in it. [The weather disturbance] was overwhelmed," Nathaniel Cruz, chief of the weather branch of the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration, told the INQUIRER.

Cruz said the Bicol region, eastern Visayas and Quezon would experience rains as a result of the northeast monsoon. Rains were also expected over eastern Visayas, he added.

"[But Metro Manila] will be pleasant as we will have cool weather," Cruz said.

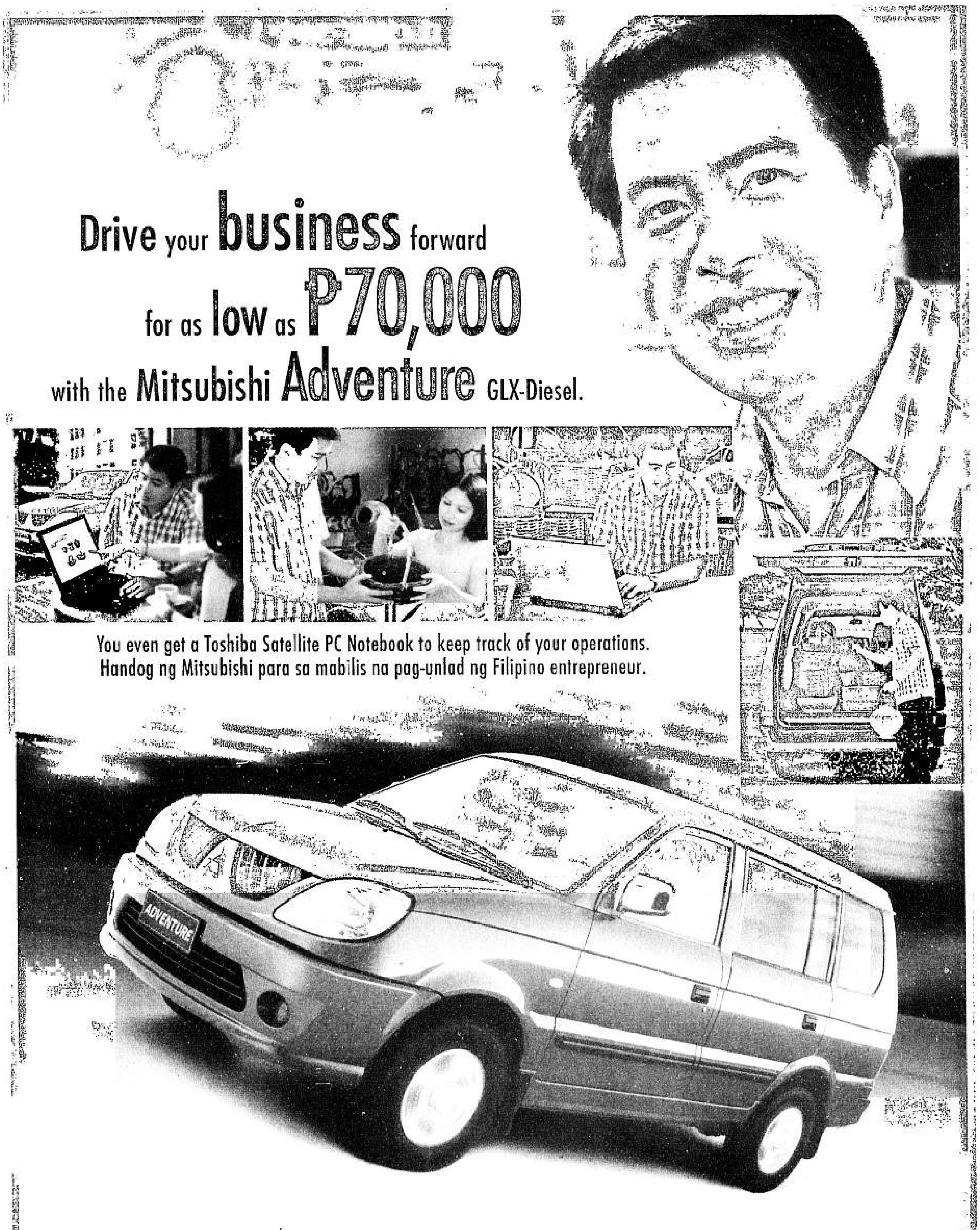
Pagasa said yesterday in its last severe weather bulletin that Tomas was still expected to enhance moderate to strong northeasterly windflow over Luzon and would cause moderate to rough seas.

Aside from Metro Manila, other regions that would experience cool winds from the north include northern Luzon, Cagayan Valley and central Luzon.

Observers expressed alarm when Tomas entered the Philippine area of responsibility as a tropical storm.

Weather disturbances that enter the Philippine area of responsibility as a storm are usually expected to intensify as they move over seas.

The last weather disturbance that hit the country, "Seniang," entered the PAR as a storm and developed into a supertyphoon. It battered Catanduanes, the Camarines provinces and Albay, just as these provinces were still recovering from the ravages of another supertyphoon, "Reming."



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3 more Air Force pilots probed for moonlighting

THREE MORE PHILIPPINE AIR Force pilots are under investigation for allegedly moonlighting as commercial airline pilots, the PAF said yesterday.

PAF information officer Maj. Augusto de la Peña said the investigation of the three officers, who all hold the rank of captain, but who were not identified, was in preparation of a possible court-martial.

"The investigation is in the initial stages. It stemmed from moonlighting allegations," De la Peña said.

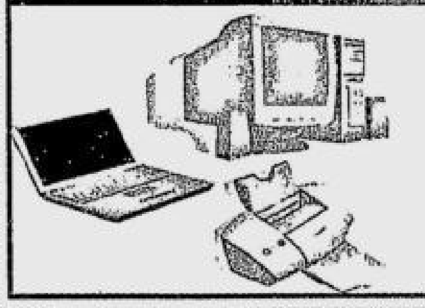
Just a month ago, Air Force Captains Hilario Pine and Roberto Solis were ordered discharged by a military court and sentenced to 60-day prison terms each after they were found guilty of moonlighting for commercial airlines.

They were found in violation of Articles of War 68 (absence without official leave) and 97 (conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman).

Still another PAF officer, Capt. Carlo Castellno, is now being court-martialed on similar charges.

A total of 1,086 PAF pilots have so far transferred to higher-paying jobs in commercial airlines.

In 2006 alone, the PAF recorded its highest number of resignations, with 54 officers leaving the service. *Alcuin Papa*



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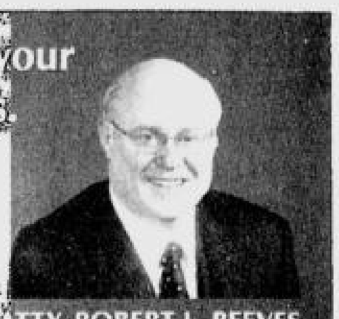

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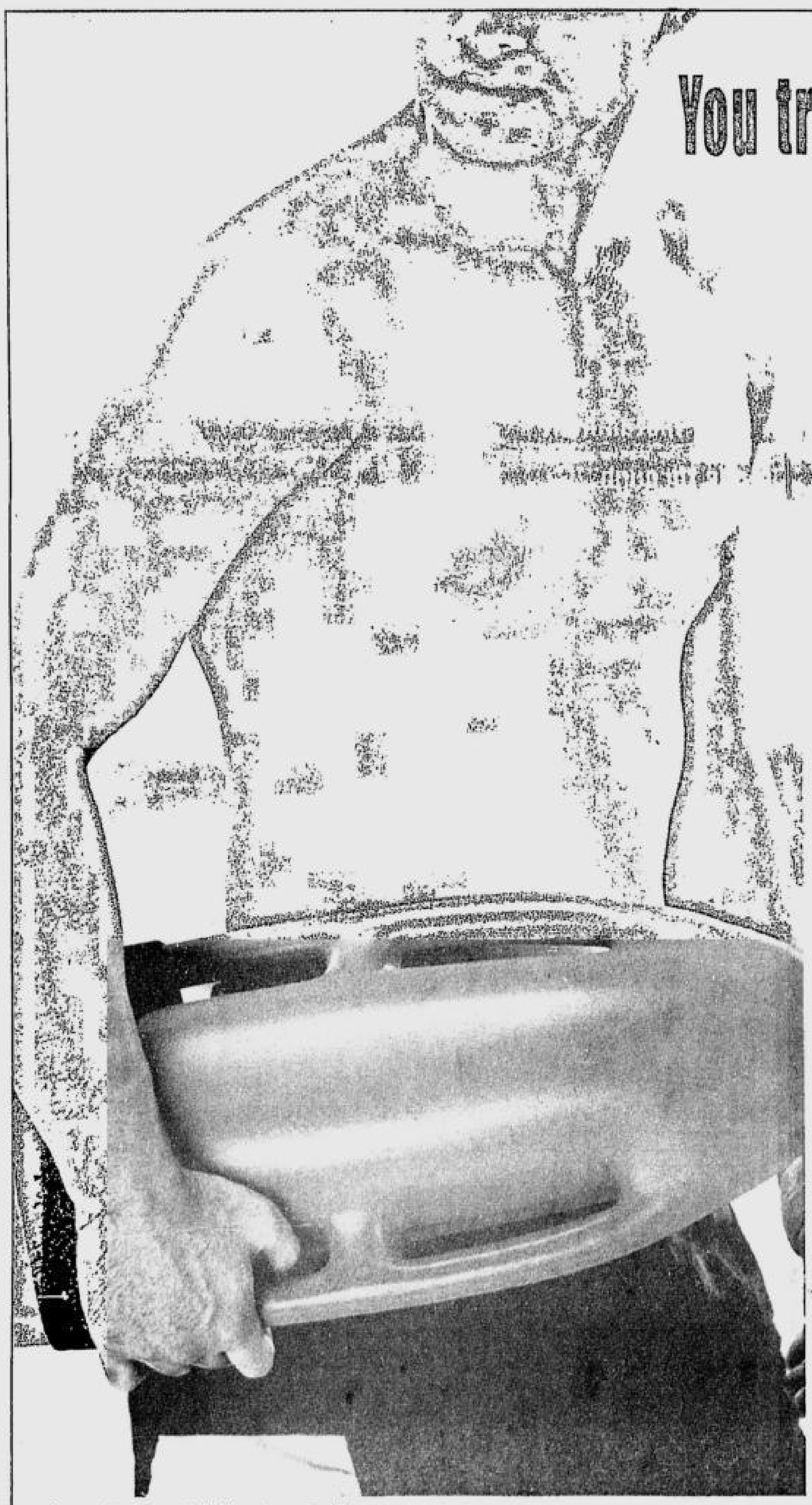

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PAMASKONG HANDOG SA OFWs

MEET/GREET/GIFT the Filipino overseas heroes: President Arroyo herself in her "Presidential Salubong sa OFW" project awards Roderick de Guzman a passenger jeep and other cash prizes at the Naia on Tuesday.
EDWIN BACASMAS

'Don't romanticize OFWs to minimize social costs'

From page A1

and family reasons; they are no more heroes than the construction workers, the jeepney driver, the vendor, the farmer, the factory worker, who daily toil in the Philippines to support self and family," said Ma. Luisa Gigette Imperial, director of DOLE's Institute for Labor Studies.

"By unduly giving honor to them, unrealistic expectations are generated," she added. "It should be understood that overseas employment is ugly for the unwise and unprepared, but provides hope for the wise and ready."

In a paper titled "Overseas Employment As A Development Strategy" delivered on Monday in a conference on migration, Imperial said that the social costs of overseas employment remained "a compelling reason" that kept the government from promoting it.

The current policy on overseas employment—"managing"—is "deemed passive and reactive" when it could be turned into "full promotion," which is a potent tool for economic growth and development, Imperial said.

The policy shift, she added, may entail more risks and more social costs so there must be "more intensive and extensive information and education campaign to empower workers for wise decisions and make them responsible for their decisions."

"If this has to be acquired starting at primary school, so be it," the DOLE official added.

Social costs

Imperial noted that overseas employment had its "attendant costs," citing the separation of OFWs from their families for long periods.

"The parental care and guidance denied the children by parents who are supposed to give these result in social maladies that oftentimes are irreparable," she said.

Imperial cited welfare cases handled by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration and nongovernment organizations that directly linked social problems, such as broken marriages, drug addiction, sexual immorality, crime, suicide or psychological breakdown to the long separations between spouses and children.

Harsh cases of abuses, especially those experienced by workers in vulnerable occupations, such as entertainers and domestic helpers, have "destroyed lives of workers and their families," she recounted.

Undervalued job categories

The systematic labor segmentation of women in the economically and socially undervalued job categories of domestics and entertainers has resulted in "serious attacks on the reputation of Filipinos in general, and Filipino women in particular, further damaging their self-worth and morale," Imperial said.

The DOLE officials, however, conceded that the possibility that such social problems may be caused by other factors other than overseas employment should not be overlooked.

The notion that the costs far outweigh the benefits, which the workers and family derive from overseas employment, may be true on a case-by-case basis, Imperial said.

She said, however, that it remained to be proven if the incidence of dysfunction among families of OFWs was higher than the average for families with no OFWs.

In the end, the question of which cost is higher—that of overseas employment or that of unemployment and poverty—would be a deciding factor, she added.

VIP treatment

Since the onset of the Christmas season, the government, in recognition of the contributions to the economy that OFWs make through their dollar remittances, has been giving VIP treatment to OFWs arriving home.

Total remittances ending October hit $10 billion, an all-time high, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported on Friday.

Yesterday, President Macapagal-Arroyo herself presided over the awarding of raffle prizes to OFW arrivals at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

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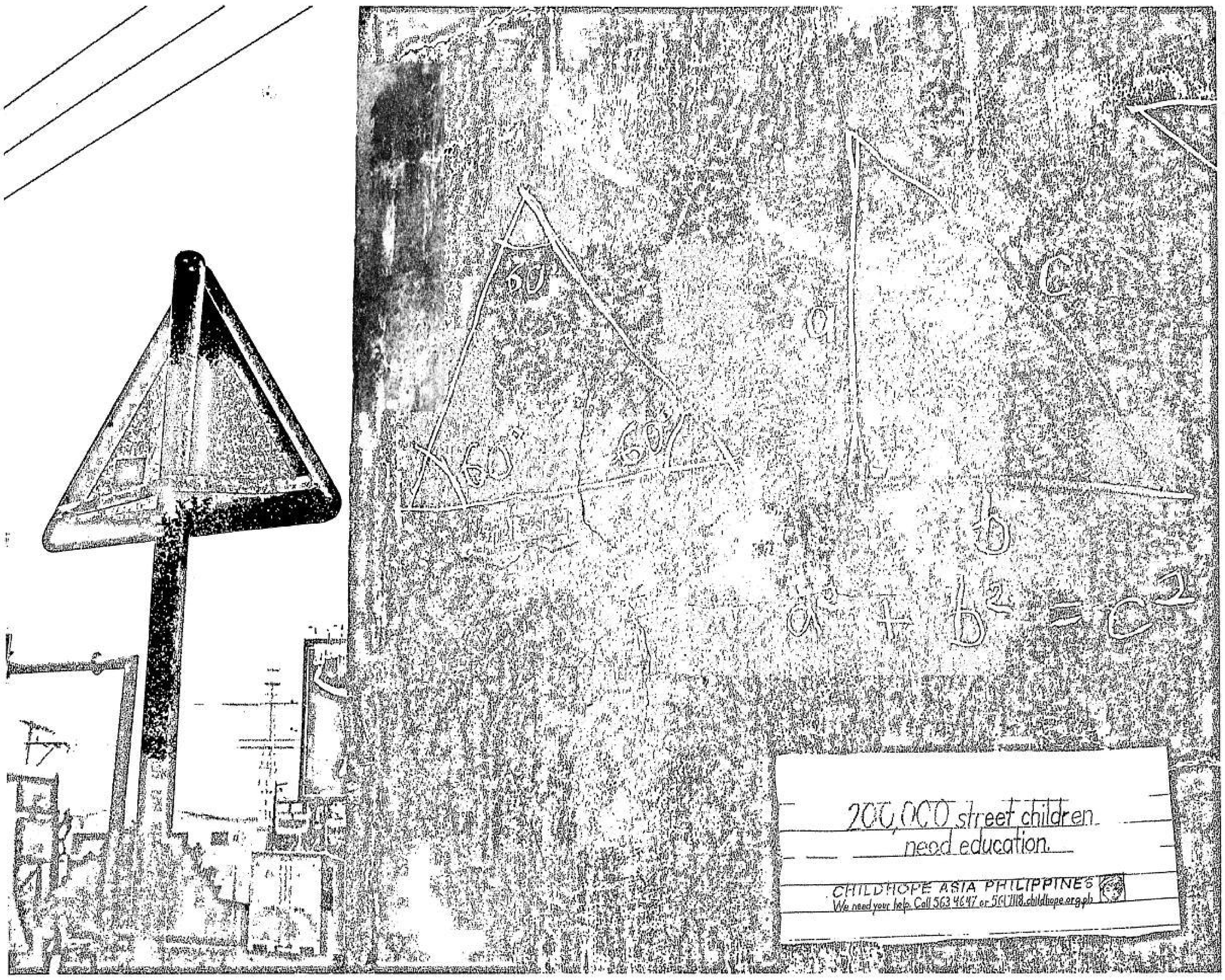
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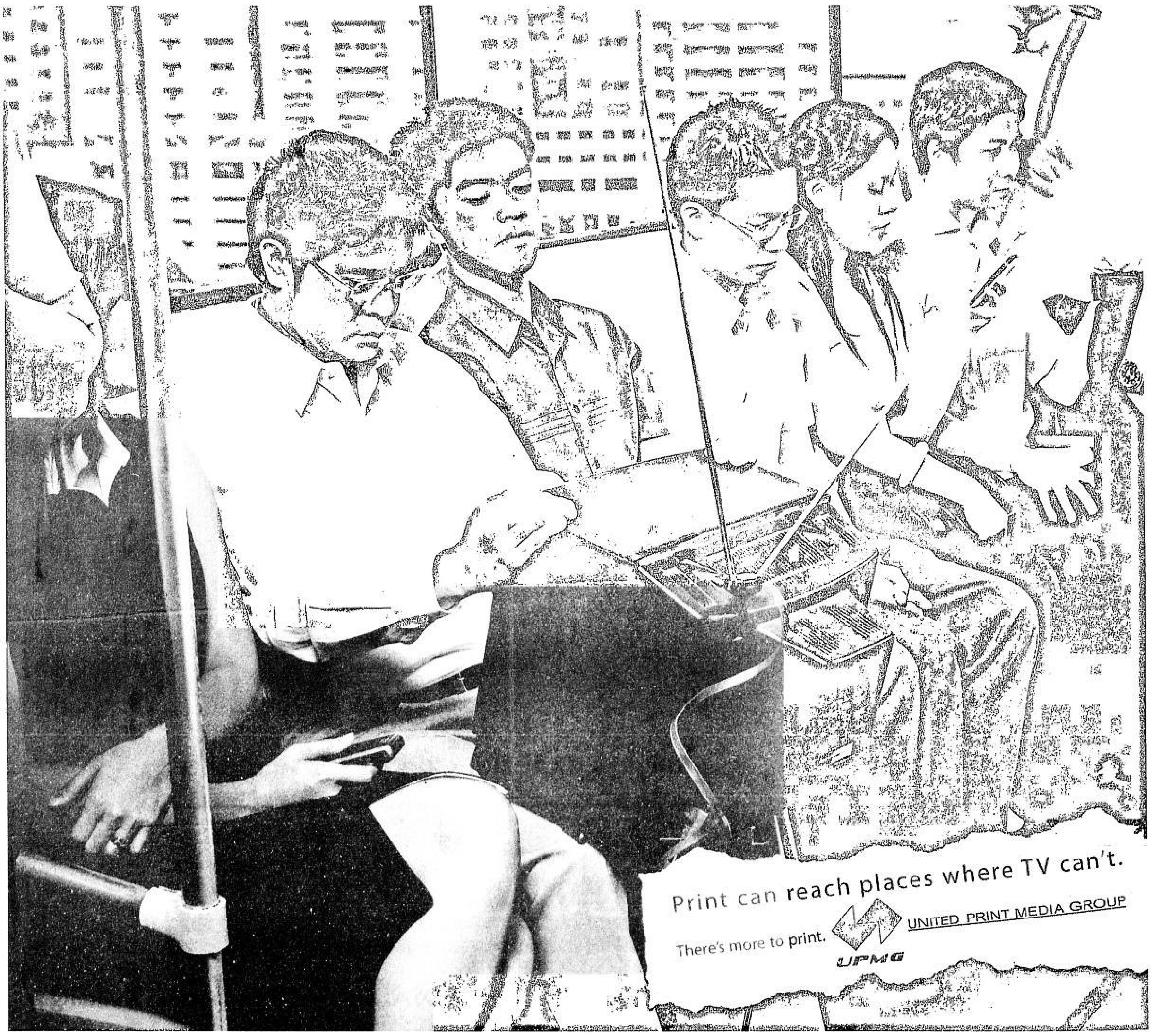
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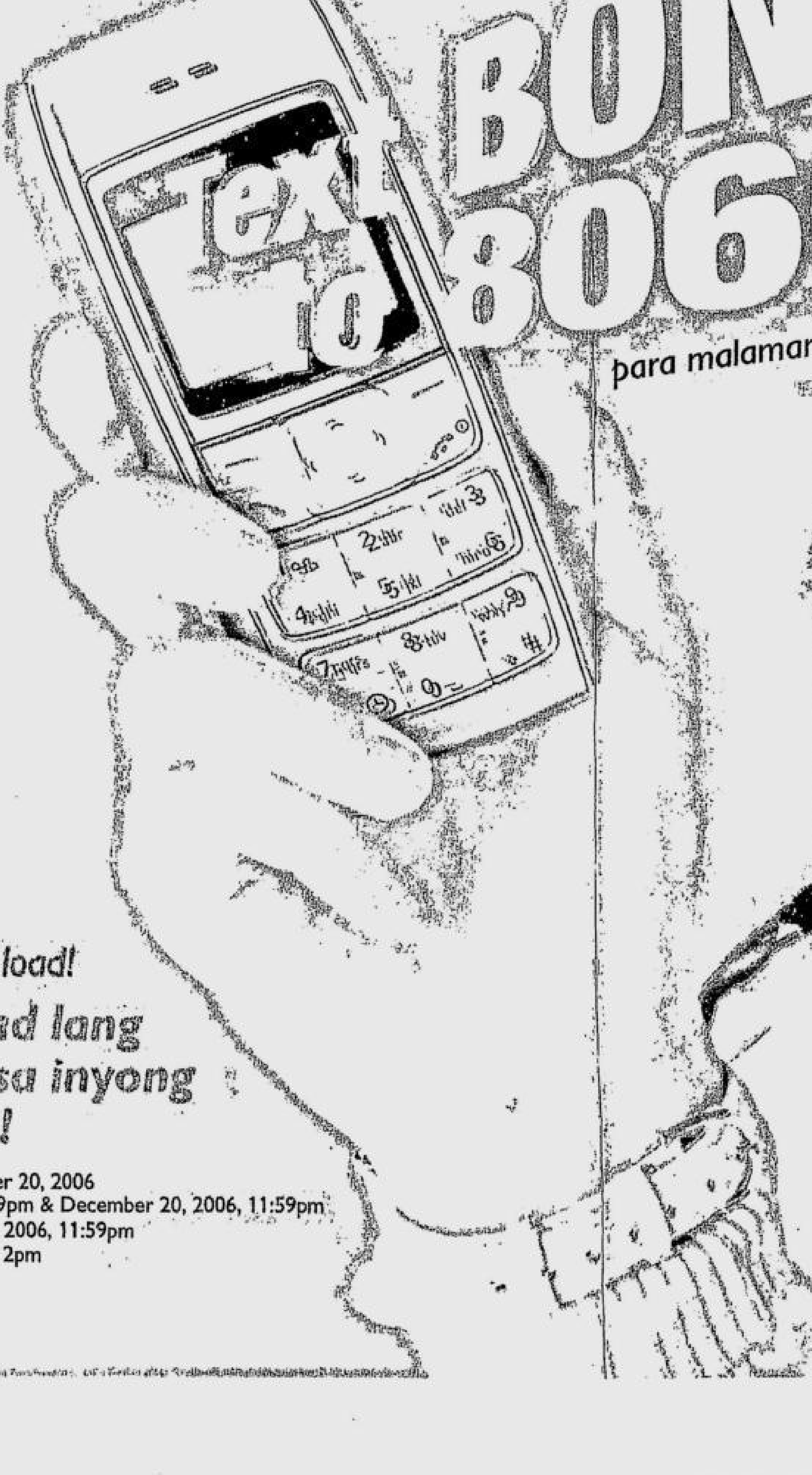

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 4366 Series of 2006

Noli extends home sales to OFWs

By Cynthia D. Balana

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO HAS extended the "bargain sale" of government-foreclosed housing units to overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) who are coming home for the holiday season.

The property sale, launched in October, was initially opened to government employees at a 25-percent discount from the Pag-Ibig Fund. Cash buyers get 30 percent off.

De Castro, chair of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) and presidential adviser on OFWs, yesterday announced that the program would be expanded to include the OFWs who are coming home for Christmas, as they may be able to visit and inspect the foreclosed houses.

"The housing units are being sold on an as-is, where-is basis. Buyers may avail themselves of a housing loan at an interest rate of 6 percent per annum, with a maximum payment period of 30 years.

Only OFWs who are Pag-Ibig members are qualified for the sale.

"The monthly amortizations on these units are very affordable, given the low interest rates and long payment terms. In some cases the monthly payments might even be lower than what they would be paying if they were renting," De Castro said.

"I know that most of our OFWs dream of buying a house for their families. With this opportunity, now would be the best time to make that dream come true," he added.

Aside from Pag-Ibig, the National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation, Home Guaranty Corporation, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, Land Bank of the Philippines, Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation, GSIS and SSS are also participating in the housing sale which will end in April 2007.

The Fund recently lowered the interest rates on its regular housing loans to only 6 percent for loan packages up to P300,000 and 7 percent for loans over P300,000 up to P500,000. The interest rate has also been decreased to 10.5 percent for loans over P500,000 to P1 million, and 11.5 percent for loans over P1 million up to the maximum of P2 million.

Pag-Ibig has increased its total collections from P26.98 billion in 2000 to P47.38 billion in 2005.

In October, the Pag-Ibig Fund received the Scroll of Honor Award from the UN-Habitat for its accomplishments in providing affordable homes to hundreds of thousands of families.

It also received a bronze trophy for its "Tapat sa Pag-Ibig" campaign in the 2006 Araw Values Advertising awards, a biennial program of the Advertising Board of the Philippines and Advertising Foundation of the Philippines honoring outstanding works that help promote and communicate Filipino values.

Pag-Ibig Fund president Romero Quimbo said the award "is a welcome bonus for us, on top of attaining our campaign's objective of raising awareness about every member's important role as a stakeholder in the Fund."

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For pensioners without eCard, you are now enjoined to enroll at the GSIS home office or the nearest GSIS servicing office immediately to avoid suspension of your pension payments.

Please be guided accordingly.

Winston F. Garcia
President and General Manager

Clothes passed off as RP-made seized

THE BUREAU OF CUSTOMS YESTERDAY filed complaints of smuggling against an alleged importer of China-made garments passed off as Philippine-made apparel and a suspected importer of used clothes or *ukay-ukay*.

The two complaints were filed before the Department of Justice.

In the first case, six people were accused of violating the Tariff and Customs Code of the Philippines for the alleged use of the country as a transshipment point to bring China-made textile products to the United States by making it appear that the goods has come from the Philippines.

The United States imposes a quota on China-made apparel.

Named in the complaint were customs broker Gilbert de Castro and Limech Garments Manufacturing Corp. officers Chou Fang Kuen, Alamco Lorin, Raquel Quintana, Priscilla Torres and Emelita Odina.

According to Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales, the six were involved in importing a container of fabrics consigned to Limech at Port of Subic in October. *Leila B. Salaverria*

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2N Shenzhen/1N Macau w/ Disney Day Tour (Jan 2007) $229
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4 women charged with faking returns

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE yesterday filed criminal charges against four women for submitting fake income tax returns (ITRs) to support their respective loan applications at various banks.

Those charged before the Department of Justice for failure to file returns, pay taxes and supply correct information as required by the National Internal Revenue Code were identified as Jessica Mendoza of Bulacan and Mary Ann Balidio of Bulacan, Leonora Quizon of Manila, and Riza Fabito of Antipolo City. They were also charged with falsification of public documents under the Revised Penal Code.

A revised Circular of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas mandates all bank borrowers and comakers to submit, in addition to the bank's usual requirements, a copy of their latest ITRs duly stamped as received by the BIR.

In addition, they are also required to submit a "waiver of confidentiality of client information" and give the bank authority to verify the authenticity of their documents with the BIR.

BIR investigation showed the respondents had submitted fake ITRs to support their loan applications.

"Through the use of these falsified ITRs, the respondents were able to make it appear that they filed their tax returns with the BIR and that the applicable taxes had been paid although there were none," BIR Commissioner Jose Mario Buñag said.

"Evidently, this was done to make it appear that the respondents had a stable source of income, and thus misled their banks into approving their loan applications," he added.
Cynthia D. Balana

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Gov't hopes share in Marcos firm will bring in billions

Lawyers demand payment for work

A FORMER STATE solicitor who claimed to have laid the legal basis for the government's recovery of the ill-gotten Marcos/Cojuangco shares in Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp. (PTIC) yesterday asked for a one-percent share of the forfeited stock's estimated value of P25.3 billion.

Lawyer Dennis Taningco, formerly of the Office of the Solicitor General, yesterday filed a notice of lawyer's lien before the Sandiganbayan and stands to get at least P253 million if the antigraft court grants his claim for compensation.

In his petition, Taningco said the combined legal services rendered by him and another OSG lawyer, Tomas Evangelista, made possible the recovery of the ill-gotten assets.

Evangelista was the solicitor who took over from Taningco in 2001, three years after Taningco claimed to have adopted the trial strategy for the government to seize the 111,415 shares of PTIC stock that the PCGG said had been acquired by the late Ramon Cojuangco acting as a dummy for the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

Taningco said that it was his and Evangelista's services and skills that brought about the recovery of the assets so that they were entitled to be fully compensated under the "quantum merit" principle.

Taningco said the shares have a value of at least P25.9 billion.

Norman Bordadora

By Alcuin Papa

THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION ON Good Government is hoping to dispose of its billions of pesos worth of shares in Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp. (PTIC), which holds a 14-percent stake in telecoms giant Philippine Long Distance Telephone Corp. (PLDT), at an optimum price.

"Of course we are hoping [the bidders] might want to add up their bids since this will be for the good of the nation," said PCGG Commissioner Ricardo Abcede.

Sale of shares

Abcede hailed Monday's decision of the Sandiganbayan antigraft court awarding the government the 111,415 PTIC shares, the equivalent of a 46-percent stake in the company, registered under the name of Prime Holdings Inc., an alleged dummy firm of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

The order paves the way for the sale of the PTIC shares that were at the center of a four-way battle for ownership among the government and the families of Marcos, Chinese-Filipino tycoon Alfonso Yuchengco and the late Ramon Cojuangco.

The Sandiganbayan's Fourth Division ordered the PTIC's corporate secretary to cancel the shares registered in the name of PHI and issue new certificates in the name of the Republic of the Philippines.

Formal transfer

The antigraft court rejected all petitions of three intervenors and defendants in favor of the government.

PCGG Commissioner Nicasio Conti earlier said the agency would comply with the order for a new registration of the shares.

Abcede said the shares will be formally transferred to the government today with officials of the Department of Finance, PCGG and the PTIC in attendance.

The finance department, which will take custody of the shares, last month started inviting possible buyers of the PTIC shares.

The PCGG earlier said it would sell the shares for between P25 billion and P29 billion.

Highest bid

One of the prospective buyers is the First Pacific Co. of Manuel Pangilinan which already controls majority of PLDT with a 24.3-percent stake. First Pacific also owns 54 percent of PTIC.

The Singapore-based hedge fund Parallax Venture Fund XXVII has put in the highest bid for the government's PTIC shares at P25.2 billion.

The PCGG, the agency tasked with the recovery of ill-gotten Marcos assets, claimed that the PTIC shares formed part of the estate of the late dictator. It said the contested shares were ill-gotten and that the Cojuangcos and PHI had acquired the PLDT shares as dummies of Marcos.

Rightful owner

In January, the Supreme Court declared the 111,415 PTIC shares as ill-gotten, and ruled that the government was the rightful owner of the shares.

The case was the result of a suit brought by the PCGG against the Marcos family, the late Ramon Cojuangco and his wife Imelda Cojuangco, and Prime Holdings for the ownership of PLDT.

Biggest stockholder

At the time the case was filed, the PTIC was the biggest stockholder of PLDT, owning 28 percent of the firm.

The Cojuangco family owns the controlling stake in Prime Holdings, making it the single biggest stockholder of PLDT at the time.

The case was a consolidation of five separate petitions between the government, and the Cojuangco and Yuchengco families arising from Sandiganbayan Civil Case No. 2 initiated by the PCGG against Imelda Marcos, her three children and other individuals.

Cross-claim

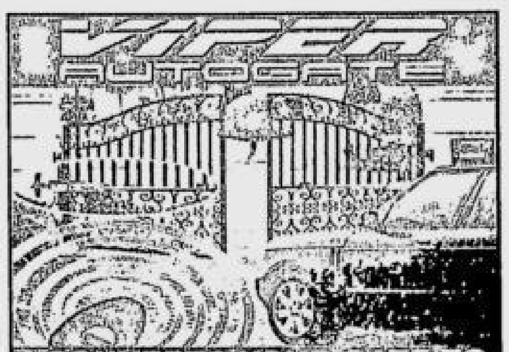
The estate of Ramon Cojuangco and Imelda Cojuangco claimed to be the rightful owners of 44 percent of PTIC.

In 1999, Imelda Marcos, the widow of the dictator, filed a cross-claim with the Sandiganbayan claiming that she and her late husband owned the 42 percent of PLDT held by the Cojuangco and Yuchengco families and Antonio Meer.

Ill-gotten wealth

Court records showed that PHI was put up on Oct. 5, 1977, through incorporators Jose D. Campos Jr., Rolando Gapud, Renato Lirio, Ernesto Abalos and Gervacio Gaviola.

The Supreme Court said that testimony from a number of the firm's former executives, particularly PHI secretary Franciso G. de Guzman, upheld the PCGG's claim that the shares were part of the Marcoses' ill-gotten assets.



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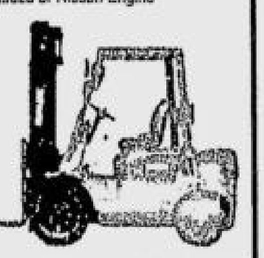

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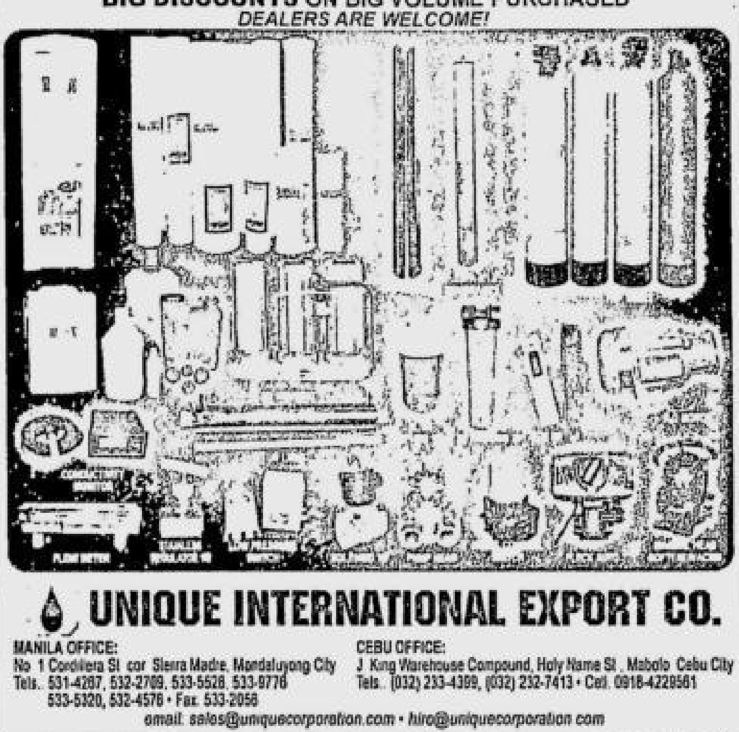

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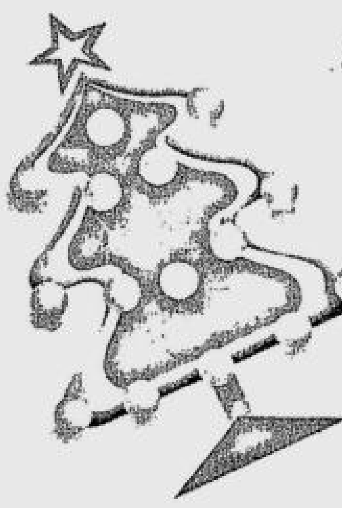
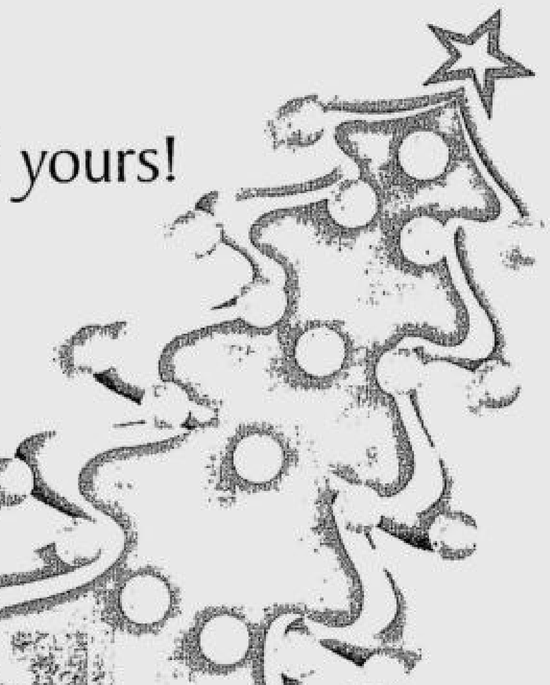

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Luzon North 1	Abanao Square – Baguio Balintawak St. – Laoag Bonifacio St. – Tuguegarao Maharlika Road – Cabanatuan Santiago – Isabela San Fernando – La Union Vigan – Quezon Avenue
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Division	Branch Name
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Luzon South 2	Imus – Aguinaldo Highway Tagaytay – Rotonda Rizal Avenue – Puerto Princesa P. Burgos – Batangas City Lipa – Rotonda Candelaria – Rizal St. Quezon Ave. – Lucena
Visayas	South - Mandaue Juan Luna – Cebu City Gorordo – Cebu City C.P. Garcia Avenue – Tagbilaran Magallanes – Cebu City Tacloban – Rizal Avenue Rosario – Lacson Jaro – Iloilo
Mindanao	Velez – Cagayan de Oro Montilla – Butuan Del Pilar – Iligan Bangoy – Davao City Bajada – Davao City Tagum – Rizal Street Pendatun – General Santos

Branches open on Dec. 30 (12nn-3pm)

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Stories from my hometown after 'Reming'

From page A1

a nearby *sari-sari* store—decades-old trees uprooted, electricity posts toppled, an entire neighborhood wiped out by mud and giant boulders from Mayon's slopes.

My father drives me around to show me the terrible details, the vignettes that did not appear in the news. We tour the city with heavy hearts.

Like a bus terminal

The airport, with its torn roof and broken walls, now resembles a ramshackle bus terminal.

The Yawa River has swelled, its strong currents pulverizing a portion of the Bogtong Road that connects the city to Barangay Tagas in Daraga town, slicing into a part of the Chinese cemetery, and, residents say, carrying away a number of the tombs.

In Barangay Busay, the pathway leading to the Cagsawa Shrine and National Park, the town's most revered ground, has been obliterated. If not for the sign that was spared by the torrents of mud, the site is easy to miss.

Now, one has to cross several creeks—nonexistent before Reming—on makeshift plywood bridges to get a glimpse of the ruins of the Cagsawa church's belfry.

(By some miracle, what is left of the belfry was left untouched by the typhoon. Again, it was a mute witness to another devastation that residents consider the "worst" after Mayon's eruption on Feb. 1, 1814, which buried the church along with some 200 people who sought shelter there from the mudflow.)

The neighborhood surrounding the tourist spot has been flattened. The walls and roofs protruding from a brown sea of mud and rocks are the only signs to show that there was once life in the area.

The smell of death still lingers.

Nothing left to destroy

The sun came out two days after Typhoon "Seniang" brushed past Legazpi on the night of Dec. 9.

But Seniang's passage was barely detectable. Reming had wrecked so much; there seemed nothing else for Seniang to destroy.

At the city proper, businessmen, vendors and office workers take advantage of the sunshine to dry whatever they fished from the chest-deep floodwaters.

Cabinets, swivel chairs, couches and bank documents are laid out on the busy sidewalks, emitting a musty odor. Wet P50 bills hang on a clothesline set up inside a bank.

Down at the satellite market on Tahao Road, roofs are festooned with wet (but still colorful) native bags and souvenirs. The owners are hoping that they can still make a sale when the items dry.

Bank manager Armando Uy talks of losing P2 million worth of property to Reming.

"All our facilities here at the office were 100-percent damaged. Our main office in Manila had to ship new computers so we can continue our transactions," he says as people outside endure a long queue at a functioning automated teller machine.

My mother, a bank employee, says she is growing weary of doing nothing at the office.

The flood destroyed the office computers, the ATM and other equipment, and the office staff is still waiting for replacements.

Precious ice

Business is bad for meat and fish vendors, who have had to limit their trade and cut 20 percent off prices because the precious ice that keeps their stocks fresh is in sparse supply.

On top of everything else, Reming has destroyed the ice plant in Daraga.

"We have to travel as far as Ligao and Iriga City (both in Albay) and Sorsogon to buy ice, which has become too expensive," says meat vendor Dante Rivero.

Some restaurants have permanently shut down. A high school classmate, who had been running a small canteen near St. Agnes' Academy, left for Manila a few days after the typhoon to recover from her loss.

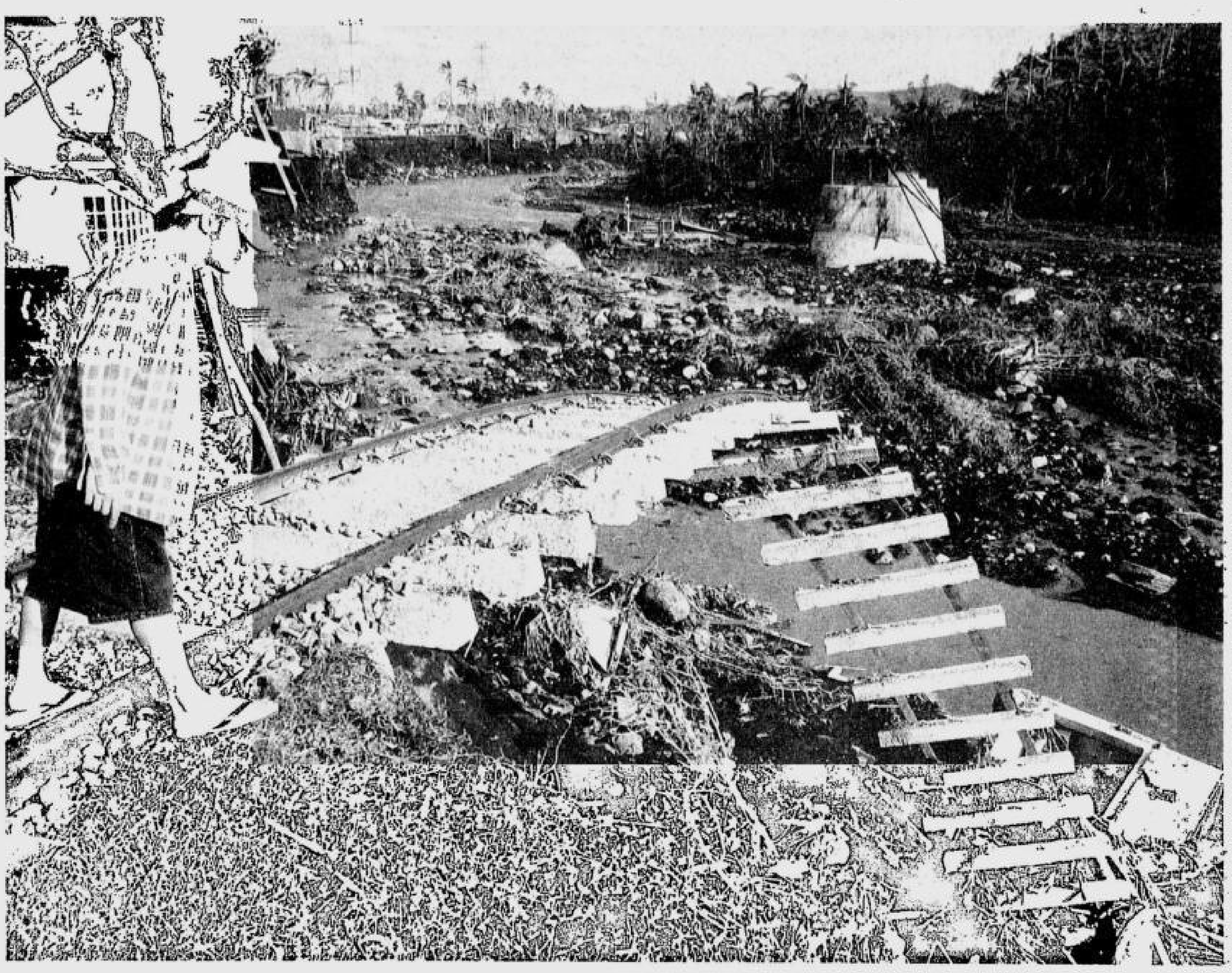
Now, many are afraid that investors and businessmen will leave the city and settle in places less affected by natural calamities.

Survivor's story

Victoria Baltasar, my mother's manager, nearly lost her life on the job.

This is her story:

On Nov. 30, the day that Reming lashed Legazpi, Baltasar and three other bank employees were at the office as early as 8:30 a.m. to make sure that they were doing "business as usual"—as what their area manager had told them earlier in the day.



A BRIDGE TOO FAR OUT: Railroad tracks twist all the way down to the river in Barangay Travesia, Guinobatan, Albay, after "Reming's" fury early this month whipped up a mudflow that washed away the bridge's concrete foundation.

NINO JESUS ORBETA/INQUIRER SOUTHERN LUZON

Two hours later, strong winds and heavy rains buffeted the city. They saw through the office's glass window that floodwaters were swiftly inundating the streets, and a number of cars were being carried away by the current.

Fear gripped them when they realized that they could be trapped inside the building.

At 5:30 p.m., the floodwaters entered the bank. Water also started pouring in a steady stream from the second floor of the building.

"This building is very old. We realized that it might cave in," Baltasar recalls.

They decided to brave the chest-deep waters to get home.

It was cold but they slowly negotiated the streets, briefly stopping at open areas on higher grounds to rest.

Chilling and weak from hunger, they plucked fruits they saw floating in the waters. "We didn't care if it was dirty or rotten. We were just too hungry," Baltasar says.

She got home after five hours of walking through the waters.

"My children thought I had been killed by the typhoon. I am really happy to be alive," Baltasar says.

Days later, she says, she wrote a letter to the head office complaining about the area office head who had instructed her and her colleagues to report for work on that fateful day.

Signs of hope

Myrna and Boy Lanuzo, both professors at the Bicol University, recount how they took their three children on an "educational trip" around the city.

"We wanted them to see how harsh nature can be, and make them realize how important it is to take care of our environment," they say.

Gemma Ala, a canteen owner at the airport, says that even if the battered city is starting from scratch, the spirit of sharing has never been more evident.

So I search for these simple signs of hope before leaving my hometown.

And I discover many:

- Two boys helping each other carry a ladder for use in mending their ruined nipa hut.
- Linesmen pulled from across the country working overtime to restore light in the city in time for Christmas.
- A priest braving the dark alleys before dawn to deliver prayers and encouraging words to residents over the radio.

Christmas may be gloomy this year in Legazpi, but the season's spirit is alive, well and burning in the heart.

Health Advisory
National Center for Health Promotion
National Center for Disease Prevention and Control

HEALTH
FOR THE
HOLIDAY SEASON

Here are some health tips for the Christmas Season:

1. Plan Christmas activities for yourself and your family to prevent tension and stress.
2. Take care of yourself and your family against changes in temperature. Children and adults may become susceptible to cough, colds and fever. If your cough, colds and fever is more than five days, consult your nearest health station.
3. Prepare a well-balanced Noche Buena and Media Noche meals. Make sure that vegetable and fruits are on the table together with your traditional ham and queso de bola.
4. Be kind to your heart. Eat a moderate amount of nutritious foods to sustain your daily activities.
5. Drink plenty of liquids. Drink plenty of water and fruit juices to facilitate excretion.
6. Have enough sleep. Give yourself enough sleep so that the mind and body can rest.
7. Avoid crowded areas because bacteria that cause diseases multiply and spread easily. Airy and well- ventilated areas are essential to healthy living.
8. Use environment-friendly Christmas decors that cost less and are not fire hazards. Save decors for next year and store them in a safe place.
9. Buy toys with no pointed or sharp edges; nor too small toys that can cause choking.
10. Do not use fireworks and firecrackers during the Holidays. Make some noise even without fireworks and firecrackers.

A reminder from DOH Secretary Duque

Ex-soldier questioned over lawmaker's slay

From page A1

House would raise a P1.2-million fund for information leading to the arrest and prosecution of those behind Bersamin's assassination.

"We will take decisive actions and bring to justice the perpetrators of this barbaric act against our friend who is very humble, a man of simplicity and wisdom and admired and loved by his people in Abra," De Venecia said.

"I say to the people of Abra, let us put an end to the infighting. We don't want Abra to be like Sicily, with its mafiosi vendetta killings," he said.

'Like Sicily'

In Bangued, Abra, a lone gunman opened fire at the house of Mayor Albert Guzman of Dolores town at 12:35 a.m. yesterday but no one was hurt, police said. Hours later, parts of the house were doused with gasoline.

Police Insp. George Ladia said the incident in Bangued was unrelated to the killing of Bersamin, 62, and his bodyguard SPO1 Adelfo Ortega on Saturday inside the compound of Mt. Carmel Church in Quezon City after the congressman stood as sponsor at the wedding of his niece.

At least 27 Abra mayors are also residents of Bangued and there had been attacks on their houses recently. He said that police have set up checkpoints in Abra, where NPA guerrillas are active.

Because of the volatile politics in Abra, police investigators in Manila were not discounting this as a motive in the attack on Bersamin.

Communist tit-for-tat

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez told the INQUIRER he was also not ruling out the involvement of the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Party, in the slaying.

"We should not discount the possibility of a communist plot because they are targeting high-profile political figures and allies of the President ... but it could be coincidence also," Gonzalez said

He made the statement when asked to comment on Bersamin's murder, the reported death threats against House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles in Davao and Pasig Rep. Robert Jaworski Jr. escaping a bomb attack that blew up his car.

Asked in a telephone interview with the INQUIRER whether the killings could be the New People's Army's tit-for-tat for the recent spate of killings of communist leaders, Gonzalez replied: "It's possible."

Gonzalez said that Jose Ma. Sison, founding chair of the Communist Party of the Philippines who lives in exile in the Netherlands, had "even declared an all-out war against the government."

Part of destabilization plot

Although the CPP-NPA could not be the sole party behind the killing of politicians, Gonzalez said they were all part of the picture and the purpose was to destabilize President Macapagal-Arroyo's administration.

"With these killings, people will be dissatisfied over the inability of the government to protect them ... the stability of the country is held in doubt not only here but abroad," Gonzalez said.

Nonetheless, the justice secretary admitted that government probers have no concrete evidence yet to pin down the CPP-NPA.

"No concrete evidence yet. But this is one angle that we are looking into," he said. "Right now there is no pattern yet, except the fact that all those killed or threatened are high-profile political personalities. We have to look at the patterns because obviously there is a political angle. Bersamin is really political, but we cannot discount other angles," Gonzalez stressed.

February coup

Gonzalez recalled that the CPP-NPA had conspired with Makabayan Kawal ng mga Pilipino (MKP) in an attempt to oust the Arroyo administration in February 2006. He said the plan included the bombing of the House of Representatives.

In Davao City, Mayor Rodrigo Duterte said the reported plot to kill Nograles had nothing to do with politics and declined to elaborate further although the House majority leader had said that the names of some militants had started to surface in the investigation.

"Nograles is politically insignificant to us. We may have criticized him on issues that we believe were anti-people but we will never go down to his level of gimmickry," Ariel Casilao, secretary general of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) in Southern Mindanao, said.

The National Bureau of Investigation has said that an attempt on Nograles' life was to have taken place at a Christmas party last week but the congressman did not show up there. *With reports from Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon, Rizalene Acac and Jeoffrey Maitem, Inquirer Mindanao*

Congress urged to pass bill on renewable energy

SOMETHING MUST BE DONE, AND SOON, IF we are to avert more debilitating catastrophes for our countrymen.

Our lawmakers need to take immediate positive action to prevent more damaging consequences from supertyphoons, says WWF-Philippines, the global conservation organization.

"Hundreds have died. Thousands have lost their homes. The damage to infrastructure and businesses will run into the billions. The level of economic dislocation is massive and continuing. All this came from one typhoon," points out WWF CEO Lorenzo Tan, referring to Supertyphoon "Reming" that recently ravaged the country.

Philippine Atmospheric, Geographical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) data showed an alarming increase in typhoon strength over the last four years. Between 2003 and 2006, the Philippines was battered by catastrophic typhoons up to six months per year.

Interaction between hot, cold

"What is happening? Simply put, the interaction between hot and cold temperatures dictates weather patterns. As the planet surface warms, the violence of this interaction increases as well," Tan explained.

Increasing levels of greenhouse gases, of which carbon dioxide is the main culprit, cause the by-now widely noticeable rise in global temperatures, he said.

"The burning of fossil fuels, primarily oil and coal, for energy or transport are the main sources of carbon dioxide. As the economies of the world continue to expand, so do their outputs of carbon dioxide. This is creating the new weather patterns that plague our world," says Tan.

WWF-Philippines has called for a proactive and strategic solution that would effectively deal with the rising temperatures caused by increasing carbon dioxide levels in the environment.

"The Renewable Energy Bill must be passed," stressed Tan.

"Technological solutions that contribute to clean and efficient energy should be identified, promoted, widely distributed and encouraged."

The Renewable Energy Bill, which is currently up for approval by the Senate, seeks to increase the use of clean renewable sources of energy—such as geothermal, wind, hydro and biomass—by offering fiscal incentives to new power projects.

Among these initiatives are a zero-VAT rating for renewable energy projects, tax-free importation of renewable energy machinery, open access to the energy grid for all renewable energy sources, and priority dispatch for wind power and other intermittent sources of energy.

The bill also incorporates a Renewable Portfolio Standard that mandates that a fixed percentage of generated power comes from renewable energy sources.

Aside from averting climate change, the Renewable Energy Bill would also have a positive economic impact on the Philippines.

Savings of $2.9B

According to a University of the Philippines Solar Laboratory study commissioned by WWF, the country could save as much as $2.9 billion from unnecessary fuel imports if it switched to renewable indigenous energy sources.

"For years, people throughout the world have spoken out against the injustice of foreign debt as they hamstrung developing nations. The 33 million Filipinos who survive on less than $2 a day have lived with this all their lives," says Tan.

"Global warming is equally unjust but many times more debilitating. Much of it is climate debt that the industrialized nations have incurred on our behalf over the last century.

"Whoever is to blame, this challenge can no longer be ignored. We are all going to have to pay for it, sooner or later. Science seems to indicate that we can still manage global climate," he stressed.

Christmas lights blinking again …

From page A1

transmission lines at P5.4 million.

The damage to transmission structures disrupted power supply to electric cooperatives in Leyte and Samar, to the Visayan Oil Mill Inc. and the Specialty Pulp Manufacturing Inc. and to Transco customers in Baybay, Leyte.

The typhoon also affected Transco's transmission lines in Biliran, Northern Samar and Eastern Samar.

Legaspina said the Leyte-Bohol 138kV transmission lines and the Leyte-Cebu 230 kV transmission lines were hardly affected by the typhoon.

But the foundation of one tower of the Leyte-Cebu 230 kV lines was eroded because of flooding in Barangay Tugbong, Kananga, Leyte.

Leyte-Luzon transmission lines

The Leyte-Luzon 350kV transmission lines has had no electricity since Reming hit the Bicol region.

Legaspina said Southern Luzon was not yet ready to receive power from Transco's Ormoc Converter Station in Ormoc City.

At a press conference in Daraga, Albay, Guillermo Redoblado, Transco's vice president for Luzon operations and maintenance, said Albay and Sorsogon would be energized by Dec. 21 at the latest.

The original target was Dec. 16.

Redoblado said the delay was caused by bad weather that hampered rehabilitation work in Albay. He also blamed the pilferage of the power line materials.

Restoration work is going on in Guinobatan town and will connect the Naga-Daraga-Sorsogon lines, according to Redoblado.

Power lines of Albay Electric Cooperative are now 87 percent restored in commercial areas and 47 percent in residential areas, according to Alex Realoza, general manager of the cooperative.

He said Legazpi City and the Albay district would be energized as soon as Transco provided the "feed" for the co-op's substations.

Realoza, however, said that he could not say when power would be restored on Cagraray island. The Sto. Domingo-Malilipot area might be energized before Christmas Day.

Sorsogon I Electric Cooperative said it was 100-percent ready to energize its service areas, while Sorsogon II Electric Cooperative said only 80 percent of its member-consumers could expect power restoration.

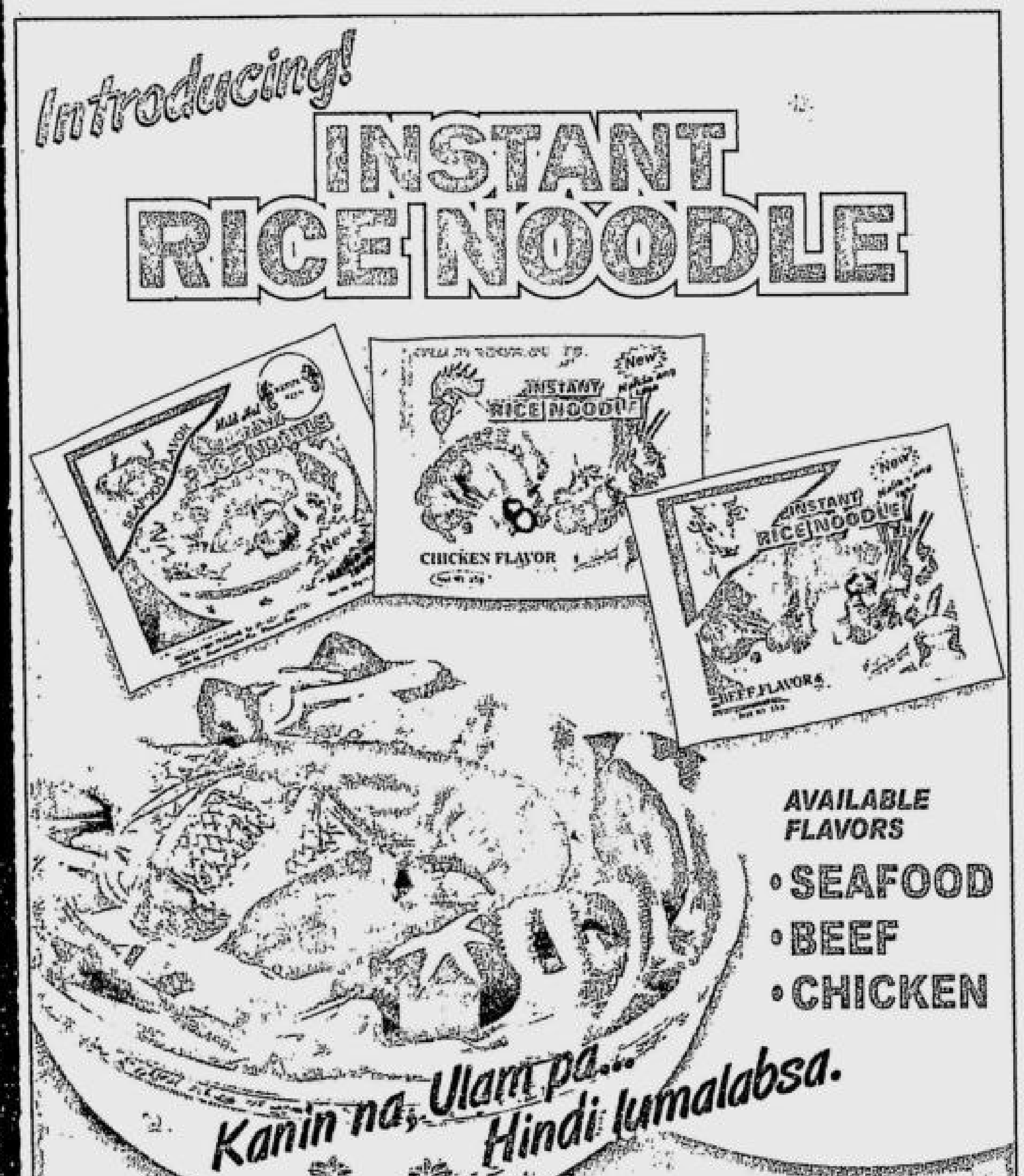
Staggered basis

Based on an updated damage report, Redoblado said a total of 118 towers and more than 2,000 poles were destroyed by Reming.

He said it would cost Transco P91 million for the temporary restoration work and another P800 million for the permanent rehabilitation of the damaged facilities.

Asked about a report that consumers would be charged the cost of the restoration work, Redoblado said this came from the Energy Regulatory Commission.

If ever the restoration costs are to be collected from consumers, it would be on a staggered basis, he said.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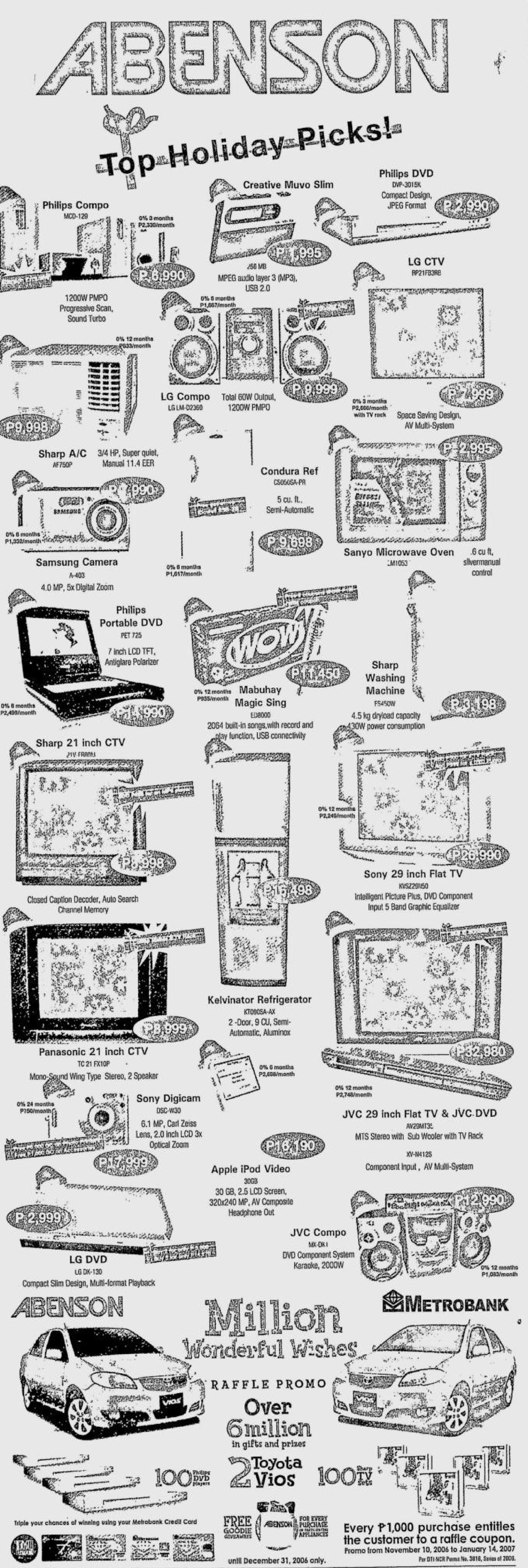
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Cha-cha, again

EDITORIAL

THE PROBLEM WITH CLERICS IS, THEY ARE HELD to a higher standard of truth and accountability than any politician will ever enjoy, much less meet. So when the spokesman of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines spoke about gathering half a million Filipinos for last Sunday's rally at the Rizal Park and a much lower number showed up, one priest's opinion became a whole event's epitaph.

Had the CBCP not raised expectations, the turnout would have been compared favorably with the number who came for the Church-led rally in November 2000 that marked the beginning of the end of the presidency of Joseph Estrada—a rally, incidentally, at which then Vice President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo spoke. She believed in people power then, even when Estrada would later produce a far larger crowd at Rizal Park. But Estrada only had one rally, and those against him had rallies at the Edsa Shrine and would return to it again in 2001.

Fair criticism has been aimed at the CBCP not only for its hyperbole concerning attendance, but also on the basis of its appearing rather timid and confused concerning the purpose of the rally itself. More than what it was against, what was the rally actually for? The outrage over the House of Representatives' ham-fisted effort to pursue Charter change that inspired the bishops to finally speak up also inspired a continuing skepticism over government's sincerity in backing out of Charter change. And yet the bishops said the time had come for thanksgiving. But for what?

For nothing, as it turns out. Yesterday, the President accomplished the latest turnaround in a political career already remarkable for frequent somersaults. While she distanced herself from her allies on Dec. 14, saying the economy should come first, yesterday she said that instead of waiting for the people "to find the proper time and opportunity," she and her allies would do it for the people. Charter change, she suddenly recalled, "is a platform commitment of the administration that will be pursued with urgency and fervor."

Such urgency and fervor for Charter change weren't there a week ago, because the urgent task at hand was to ensure no public demonstration of fervor would take place. The wind was taken out of the sails of an alarmed citizenry by the administration's declaration that Charter change was dead—for now. Appeals were made to the bishops not to go ahead; and when they said they would, their venue for the original rally date—Friday—was taken away. Then the government speculated about terrorist threats to scare away ralliers. Parents were warned that the lives of their children could be at risk if they allowed them to attend the rally. The same government officials who had dismissed warnings about terrorism stalking the Asean summit meeting in Cebu took the lead in warning about the dangers of going to Rizal Park.

Military men and civilian workers in government were reminded that being seen at the rally would have administrative consequences. Troops were called in from outside Metro Manila. The police were placed on red alert. Some bishops were slandered by officials, who said the prelates were involved in plotting rebellion, that there were secret tunnels and giant vaults of cash. And finally, the Red menace was trotted out.

This assault on the senses made the CBCP punch-drunk. It staggered on, fending off the blows that began prior to the rally and which continues to this day. The congressmen who were whipped last week and are striking back today, those who marveled at the backlash yesterday and are now the first to proclaim the rally a non-event—all are part of the same effort. And that effort, as the President made clear yesterday, is to restart what she had said was off the table just last week: Charter change, on the administration's own terms in conformity with its own wishes.

We can only conclude that the House and Palace's seeming remorse last week was feigned. They had stopped the political and even spiritual momentum that scared them to death over the past two weeks. The satisfaction they expressed immediately after Sunday's rally should be understood in terms of contentment over how their manipulation of the situation succeeded.

Last week, the House demonstrated the height of folly. We did not expect it or the President to fall prey to their delusions so quickly and so shamelessly. They are poised to repeat the error, mistaking a temporary reduction in tensions as a victory and a license to do what they want.

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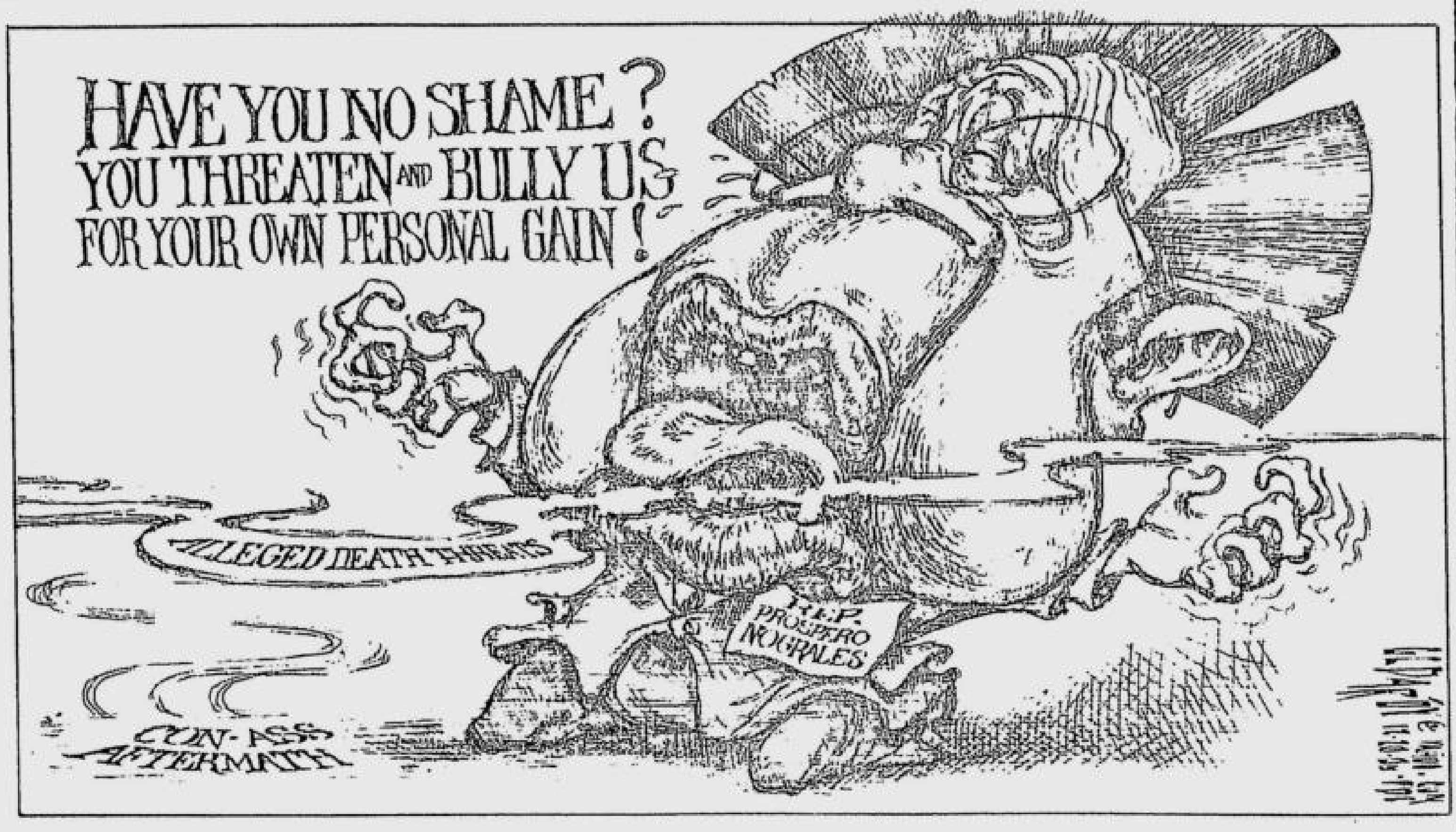


HAVE YOU NO SHAME? YOU THREATEN AND BULLY US FOR YOUR OWN PERSONAL GAIN!
ALLEGED DEATH THREATS
REP. PROSPERO NOGRALES
CON-ASS AFTERMATH

How much in taxes did RP's richest pay?

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

"THEY KILLED THE WRONG CONGRESSman!"

I heard this exclamation while passing the corner coffee shop. A group of men were discussing the assassination of Abra Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr. in Quezon City the other day.

"There are so many other congressmen who deserve to say goodbye to this world," the man continued. "Not Bersamin. Whatever his sins were to the mastermind in the killing cannot be any worse than the sins of the administration congressmen who tried to rape our Constitution and the people by railroading that Con-ass resolution through the House."

Naturally, that provoked this question: Who are these congressmen you are referring to?

"You can take your pick," he replied. "There are so many of them, it would be a waste of bullets to shoot all of them."

The man hastened to add: "I am not suggesting at all that anyone of them be shot. Killing is too good for them. They should live and suffer the consequences of their misdeeds."

This led to a round of joking and throwing about of names (none of whom I will dare repeat here; you make a game of guessing who they are) until somebody, still joking, threw this question: "If you were given the power to name 10 persons to face the firing squad, whom would you choose?" (Remember, those men were only joking.)

Names were thrown around, accompanied by colorful exclamations, until the man who asked that question said: "Let's take a poll. Each one will list down 10 names, then we will count the names of those most mentioned and make a final list." He asked the waitress for pieces of paper, distributed them to his drinking pals. After a few minutes, he said: "All right, pass your papers."

He gathered all the ballots, counted the names most often mentioned, and ranked them by the number of votes they got. You would like to see the final list, wouldn't you? Of course, you would, and so did I.

So I moved over and looked over their shoulders to peek at the list. I won't repeat the names here, sorry. All I can say is that there were no surprises. They are names you probably would write down yourself.

The next question would be: "How many men and how many women were there in the lists?"

Answer: Mostly men; there were only two women, one of whom was consistently at or near the top.

Next question: "Give the reasons why you included each name in your list."

One by one, they gave their reasons, and again there were no surprises. The most common reason was the recent Con-ass railroad derailed by the collective anger of the public. Next reason was the repeated lying by the candidates to the public.

"They can't even lie well," quipped one man. "Their lies are so obvious and transparent."

Still another reason is graft and corruption, with the pork barrel system as the most hated.

What lesson can be gathered from this little game a group of men (a little tipsy, but only a little) played? That our public officials—especially those on the lists—better watch out. Like Santa Claus, people are making mental lists. Our *masa*, often derided as the "*bakya*" crowd who can easily be fooled and bribed, are not that ignorant and innocent. This quote is as true today as when it was written decades ago: "You can fool some of the people all the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all the people all of the time."

This has been proven in the Philippines many times before—from the many pocket revolts that culminated in the 1896 Revolution against Spain and the United States, to the guerrilla war during the Japanese Occupation, to the modern-day people power that toppled two presidents and almost toppled a third, to the prayer rally at the Rizal Park only last Sunday against the Con-ass, Cha-cha and the abuses of the administration congressmen.

They are all proof that the Filipino may appear meek, docile and patient at first, but underneath he is like a volcano seething in anger at all the abuses that he is made to suffer; that now and then this volcano will erupt and bury its abusers.

Last Sunday's prayer rally was just a warning, a slight tremor. The next one may not be so slight.

* * *

So we have a number of billionaires and multimillionaires—led by Henry Sy, Lucio Tan, Jaime Zobel de Ayala and Danding Conjuango—as listed by Forbes Magazine in its latest Asian edition. The Philippines' richest 40 have a combined net worth of $16 billion (that's billions in American dollars). Forbes listed the net worth of each of them, the richest being Sy with $4 billion.

Now, wouldn't it be interesting if the Bureau of Internal Revenue would release, in the name of transparency, its own list detailing how much each of them paid in personal income taxes (not corporate income tax)? Are their personal income taxes proportional to their wealth and income? We already know the wealth of each of them, let's find out how much in taxes each of them paid.

I know that it is against the law for the BIR to make public the personal income tax paid without the permission of the taxpayer. But if the taxpayer paid the correct taxes, I don't see why he would be ashamed to reveal it. You try to hide it only when you know there is something to be ashamed of, such as when the amount paid is less than honest.

Wouldn't it encourage Filipinos to pay their correct taxes if they see that the nation's wealthiest are also paying the highest taxes?

* * *

There will be no Kapihan sa Manila for the next two Mondays, Christmas Day and New Year's Day. The next one will be on Jan. 8, 2007.

Threshold

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

JOSE ABUEVA, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE University of the Philippines and chair of the Constitutional Commission that was pushing for a new charter, has an interesting theory about why Cha-cha failed. It failed, he said, because GMA was unpopular. "Many people would rather focus on personalities. The President has 60 percent unpopularity and she is the symbol of Charter change."

I buy the part about GMA's unpopularity, but I beg to disagree with my friend about this being a reflection of people thinking personality rather than substance. Most Filipinos rejected Cha-cha not because of personality but because of substance. That substance is credibility. It was the lack of credibility of the people espousing Cha-cha and not simply GMA's lack of popularity that doomed it.

Credibility is substance, not form. Who is standing for something matters as much as, if not more than, what he is standing for. It mattered that Ferdinand Marcos wanted a combined presidential and parliamentary form of government that would have him as president and prime minister at the same time. It matters that GMA and Jose de Venecia want a parliamentary system that will either allow GMA to rule forever or De Venecia to finally achieve his dream of occupying Malacañang, a thing he will never get from presidential elections, whichever comes first or at all.

The principle is simple: The devil himself may quote Scripture to suit his purposes. You hear the devil doing that, forget Scripture and start running like hell. Or bringing out your crosses.

I have another theory about why Cha-cha failed, and that is that it finally crossed the Filipinos' threshold of forbearance. That was what drove them to bring out their crosses when they heard the devil quoting Scripture. Indeed, that was what drove the bishops quite literally to the streets, if not in clamorous arms at least in fretful prayer.

I am not being facetious at all when I thank the *tongressmen* for restoring this nation's capacity for outrage. Almost single-handedly, they did what the opposition, the Church, civil society, business, media and the irate housewives had not been able to do for a long time. Almost overnight, they rallied and united the people—against them.

Ironically, the *tongressmen* fell into the very trap they had been avoiding studiously. That was giving the public images of intolerable abuse and oppression, which had happened to Joseph Estrada during the impeachment trial. That impeachment trial had turned Erap from hero into heel. That was the reason the *tongressmen* killed the impeachment bids against GMA: She would never have survived them, and they along with her. The images that would flash on TV in particular would be more than the public could bear. They would have tumbled out like a great flood to cleanse the nation of its dregs.

Yet the *tongressmen* offered the same fare in their "deliberations" on Cha-cha, the word "deliberations" being in quotation marks because the only thing to suggest it was their deliberate effort to screw the public. More than the killing of the impeachment bids against GMA, the *tongressmen's* railroading of the Cha-cha against reason, against opposition, and against every shred of decency, unfurled a spectacle of a gangster clique drunk with power. So totally wasted, so totally lost in the embrace of ambition, they could not see or hear or smell or taste or feel the anger swirling around them.

I remember that a friend of mine objected violently to the INQUIRER's use of the word "hubris" in an editorial. As far as he can recall his classical education, he said, "hubris" pertained only to tragic heroes. It took heroic stature to fall into hubris, which was overweening pride that went with overachieving. There was nothing heroic or tragic or lofty in what the *tongressmen* did, he said. They were just a bunch of goons trying to mug the nation. He had a point.

Which brings me to what the Filipino threshold is, to what finally snaps his monumental capacity for forbearance once it is crossed. There is one. It was captured perfectly many years ago in that phrase, "*Tama na, sobra na, palitan na.*" We have a tremendous capacity for patience, as Jose Rizal noted during his time—which is not unlike ours in that it seemed that the oppressed would be content to be oppressed forever. But even that breaks under an intolerable weight. For Rizal, that intolerable weight is insult added to injury.

I confess that when I read this in my youth, I, like many activists, took it with a large grain of salt, if not dismissed it as a lot of romantic tosh. But if there is any large grain there, it is that of truth. The Spaniards, said Rizal, thought they were delivering the coup de grâce to the abject *indio* when they abused him in mind apart from belly, in soul apart from body, reducing him to nothingness, an insignificant object of nature that could be ignored, or obliterated at will if it came to that. The final blow in fact became the cure, like potent medicine injected to the dying. It revived the *indio*.

GMA and the *tongressmen* thought too that they were delivering the final blow to an abject race, one that had learned to take abuse with the hope of escaping it only by leaving for Saudi Arabia or embracing it like a penitent murmuring, "Life goes on." That was by adding injustice to poverty, iniquity to oppression. They thought they would stamp out all protest altogether by reducing the citizenry to powerlessness, one whose objections could be ignored, if not overruled, one whose voice could be drowned in the howling of the winds or the cacophony of voices in the Batasan, whichever was louder. The final blow became the cure, like potent medicine administered to the dying. It woke up the nation with a jolt. We began saying again:

Tama na, sobra na, palitan na.

Cancer with a decoy

HIGH BLOOD

Ernesto P. Namin, M.D.

WE'D also like to know the concerns of the sixtysomething and above, what makes their blood pressure rise or makes them sit back, content that all's well with their world and with themselves. —Ed.

OCCULT MALIGNANCY LURKS QUIETLY IN parts accessed only with difficulty. it may not show readily in regular check-ups. To top it all, there may be no symptoms. A variant is malignancy with a decoy, much like a pickpocket who distracts his victim's attention while working on his hip pocket. It could have taken a foothold in the lungs or in the prostate in "plain sight," but mine had to be different.

I was watching my prostate because I seemed to have trouble in that area which seemed to worsen with stress. I reduced many of the activities I had that involved meeting deadlines. I had a small urinary bladder pouch which was probably inborn. These I watched with periodic examinations. Three years ago, I had some red blood cells in the urine, but this was resolved following a course of antibiotics.

In March 2006, I became concerned when my blood creatinine indicated a growing impairment of kidney function. The ultrasound specialist decided to look beyond the urinary bladder and just to the left of our usual focus, she found obstruction of the tube (ureter) draining urine from the kidney to the urinary bladder. Now I had more red blood cells in the urine but still no symptoms.

I went on to have further examinations, which led to a need to remove the left kidney and ureter. All these were performed in Bacolod by a five-member surgical team. The result was no surprise: I had cancer of the ureter that had already spread.

I had talked with cancer patients just weeks before I learned I had become a victim myself, and they were one in wailing that chemotherapy was distressful and draining. Two of our oncologists told me it was worth a try, that there are new and effective drugs used to reduce the violence of side effects. The strongest persuasion must have come from my wife who, in her usual gently persuasive manner, whispered to me that they "wanted to have more time with me." That closed the matter of deciding to accept chemotherapy.

A large team pulling in the same direction has been working on me. Maybe this is good because it dissipates responsibility and guilt feelings will be minimized. I have tried to contribute to soothe feelings with a letter.

"To My Attending Doctors:

"Please be reminded that, of all people, I must be well aware of your track record. So, if I repose full trust in your professional skill, integrity, sensitivity, compassion and judgment, be assured that it is not without any basis.

"As I stated before, my family does not engage in the blame game. Your decisions are my decisions. I know only too well how difficult my case is and I am not about to make it more difficult. Please feel free to consult other doctors.

"Only a few things I ask:

"(1) Always consider risk:benefit, discomfort:benefit and cost:benefit ratios. The cost, tedium and discomfort of treatment can be backbreaking and heart-breaking. There is a place for fine-tuning treatment but not if it is only of little help and no better than well considered clinical judgments. Labs are expensive, sometimes unreliable, and require painful punctures.

"(2) Consider less expensive, less painful, less risky alternatives.

"(3) Easing discomfort is paramount, aware of the principle of double effect: that if the best process presents necessary risks, but will ease discomfort, go for it.

"(4) Do not let the treatment of disease be 'more grievous than the sufferance of the same.'

"(5) Minimize, if not eliminate, academics.

"(6) Love one another as I have loved you."

I have worked with many of them when they were medical trainees. I feel gratified that the worst physical crisis in my life has brought out the best in them. My medical partner consistently endeavored to make the best even better. My cancer specialist interrupted his stay in Manila to fly back to Bacolod to personally administer my dose of chemotherapy. All these make me feel good inside and make me happy that I have lived a life of sharing with others, of passing on the good.

I was done with chemotherapy on July 25. However, a reexamination of the urinary bladder in early October revealed recurrence. This time I declined to accept another form of chemotherapy which was still in the trial stage.

Now past 76 years, something like this is "par for the course." Working keeps my mind alert although my load is a lot lighter.

For years I have been ready with an advance directive or a living will which directs my caregivers what not to do when I can no longer take part in the decision-making. I think everyone should have one. The call home from the Supreme Author makes no distinction at all—young or old, rich or poor, beautiful or not so beautiful, smart or not so smart are treated just the same, and the unprepared are the most shocked and lost, much like being caught in a big fire without the benefit of prior drills.

"If you have it, flaunt it." This may seem more like a boring tale, but maybe there are lessons to learn from the experience.

Ernesto P. Namin, 76, is a cardiologist.

Media and decorum

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

A FRIEND ONCE REMARKED THAT THE REASON the Oakwood mutineers called off their siege of a high-end Makati hotel was that they had gotten tired of dealing with the Philippine media.

If you remember, one of the putative coup leaders was so riled by the rambunctious media covering the event, especially the photographers and TV camera men, that he drew his gun and threatened to fire it if the news hounds didn't behave themselves.

Journalists have never been the decorous sort, and in fact take pride in being *pasaway*, the local term for the habitual rule-breaker.

It's ironic, therefore, that these days the media are all agog over decorum—or the lack of it—displayed during a press conference called by House Speaker Joe de Venecia and his henchmen. The incident produced such compelling video footage it threatened to swamp the constitutional and political crisis that the House leadership had precipitated.

Here in the INQUIRER, it has led to a re-examination of journalistic values and behavior and, I heard, even an investigation into the shadier aspects of our profession.

I'm talking, of course, about the hullabaloo raised by activist Renato Constantino when he stood up in the midst of the press conference and began denouncing what De Venecia and Co. had done and berating them and calling them names. This raised the ire of some media folk present, with Star columnist Chit Pedrosa loudly demanding that Constantino "respect our representatives."

But the most dramatic part of the incident took place outside the function room as Constantino was being herded out, even as he continued loudly denouncing the congresspersons to TV reporters trailing him. This was when INQUIRER business columnist Vic Agustin rushed to Constantino and threw a glassful of water at the interloper—later reasoning that such a "hot-headed" individual needed some cooling down.

* * *

IN DEFENSE of Agustin, and to explain their umbrage, other journalists said that Constantino, not being a journalist, had no business disrupting a press conference. The press conference, they said, was a "sacrosanct" institution, a venue for sharing and trading information.

Excuse me, have I been part of a different institution all these decades? When did the media community turn into a club of hoity-toity elites? When did we begin enforcing rules of right conduct and proper behavior?

Press conferences have always been messy affairs. They're not private parties, although someone certainly pays for the food and the venue. And there's nothing better than an activist or two standing and stirring things up, enlivening an otherwise boring affair, and making for good copy and lively footage.

Constantino was uninvited? When did we ever bother to check each other's credentials at the door? Especially these days when any blogger can claim an audience, anybody can become part of the media community. And we in the media, who depend precisely on openness and access and freedom of expression for our bread and butter, have no business excluding people from press conferences or seeking to silence them.

* * *

AS a consequence of the water-throwing incident, Agustin has been suspended for a month by the INQUIRER for behavior unbecoming a columnist of this paper.

I wasn't privy to the process by which this decision was made, but I am happy some action was taken. I was rather embarrassed, watching the exciting footage, being part of the same paper as Agustin, especially since he seemed unapologetic for and even gleeful about his rather melodramatic gesture, channeling Cherie Gil in full *contravida* mode, no less!

My own sentiments about Agustin's behavior are regret and dismay. He didn't have to get involved. If anyone had the right to throw a glass of water at Constantino, it would have been De Venecia or any one of the congresspersons present. They had, after all, been insulted in public. What beef did Vic have against Constantino, who has survived a heart bypass and yet continues to lend his voice to many causes? Was he offended by the lack of decorum shown by this son of one of the country's foremost nationalists? Then why didn't he rush and slap that congressman who berated the people at the public gallery that rambunctious night when he told them to shut up because they were not members of Congress? Talk about bad manners!

But the sanctions against Agustin, I must say, have had a chilling effect not just on INQUIRER columnists but on all journalists working for respectable newspapers and broadcast entities. I will certainly think twice, or more, before taking a glass of water in hand during a public affair, especially during press conferences. Who knows what I might do with it?

* * *

IN HER book "Wallflowers at an Orgy," Nora Ephron (now a successful movie director) explained why she decided to stop writing her columns on the media for a magazine. It's bad news, she said, when media people begin making news instead of covering them.

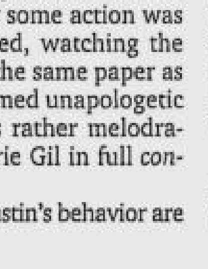
Ideally, we media professionals should keep in the background, blending with the furniture and staying uninvolved, the proverbial "wallflowers at an orgy." Because when we begin projecting ourselves into the picture, becoming part of the story we are covering, we not only lose our objectivity but also our focus and motivation.

It's certainly difficult to resist the blandishments of media celebrity-hood. It's quite an ego massage to be recognized by strangers and even approached for autographs. But when the adulation becomes the goal and not just the perk, then it's time to ask ourselves why we are in this profession at all.

If politics is show biz for ugly people, then journalism should be show biz for people who would rather remain invisible.

Gifts

LOOKING BACK



Ambeth R. Ocampo

WHEN I LOOK AT ALL THE HIGH-SUGAR GOODies lying under my Christmas tree, I'm happy to note that I have not received a single fruit cake. Either my circle of thoughtful friends has become smaller, or they have become more creative with regard to gifts, or people are starting to realize what I have been saying all along: there are only eight fruit cakes in existence at any one time and what appears to be a big number of them are just the eight pieces being recycled. I keep telling friends who receive a fruit cake to carve their initials on the bottom, wrap it, recycle it and count the days before it comes back.

Rushing to buy Christmas gifts this year, I opted not to take the easy way out by buying wine, cakes, candles or candies. I wanted to give plants away, but didn't know what to choose. A pair of goldfish in a bowl was a thought but rather difficult to deliver. A good gift would be a large jar of those whole peaches in syrup, better known in Spanish as *melocoton en alimbar,* very impressive and pretty actually, but the last time I gave these away, it also gave my driver a hernia.

This year, I settled on sparkling apple cider, which reminds me of Sunday lunch in an old English monastery I stayed in years ago. I just hope the recipients will appreciate it. Christmas shopping is really a chore and I wish I had my sister's organization and foresight—she buys her gifts months before the Christmas Season—but I think that spoils the fun.

Christmas shopping is like writing this column: the only inspiration is the deadline. Nobody seems to ask what I would want for Christmas for fear that I would tell the truth and ask for: a Bencab "Larawan," an early figurative Arturo Luz or Fernando Zobel, a manuscript page edited out of Carmen Guerrero Nakpil's or Gilda Cordero Fernando's autobiography, an abstract, probably sexual sculpture by Napoleon Abueva, an underglaze red *balimbing* jar, or just a good *santo.* There are so many things I will not get this year, but hoping is half the fun of Christmas.

Then there is always the gift of food and drink that I always enjoy. When I saw Quezon Hall in UP Diliman all decked out for Christmas, I looked at the Oblation and remembered not the annual streaking, now known as the Oblation Run, but how I got into collecting sculpture years ago when I could not afford paintings. Everyone seems to know what to do with a painting—you hang it on a wall or let it rest stylishly on an easel, but a three-dimensional piece of art is a different thing unless it's a *santo* placed atop an altar table or a *bulul* that you leave near a door to drive away children and other assorted pests.

Since my father was collecting paintings and I stood to inherit at least a third of it one day, I decided early on to buy sculpture. Two decades ago, when I acquired a bust of Rizal by Guillermo Tolentino, I realized that there were other sculptors around, among them, Anastacio Caedo, Isabelo Tampingco, Graciano Nepomuceno, or even Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera who did representational sculpture. Then there were Abueva, Arturo Luz, Impy Pilapil, Solomon Saprid, Ramon Orlina and Eduardo Castrillo who were doing "modern" work. There were also the mother and daughter, Jullie Llluch and Aba Dalena, doing wonderful figurative work in clay.

I first met Guillermo Tolentino's widow, Paz Raymundo, in 1985 after I had written about her husband for Weekend magazine. She was irritated by some inaccuracies in the article at the start, but we became fast friends. What started as interviews for a future article became a regular excuse to feast on her spaghetti with a special chicken sauce. From her and from other sources, I was able to acquire a collection of Tolentino sculptures that made my study look like a museum, prompting an institution to acquire all the pieces from me two decades later.

I shifted to colonial religious imagery or *santos* when E. Aguilar Cruz took me along on his weekly hunt in the Ermita antique shops. I bought the best that I could find with a tight student's allowance and assembled quite a collection of folk images. I was particularly drawn to the colorful Bohol pieces that nobody seemed to want in those days because one was not moved to prayer if an image of the Virgin Mary came in the shape of a bell and was in bright screaming colors of blue, yellow and red.

Unfortunately, my father would tease me about my *basura* collection and that led me to put almost everything in a box one day and exchange them for Filipiniana books at Mario Alcantara's Heritage Art Gallery. I regret doing that today, and I think my father does too because the prices for colonial religious imagery have gone through the roof. I'd like to think that the 1998 Centennial made people aware of the value of old things, which partly explains the ridiculous prices of Filipiniana these days.

One would think a real demand for tangible heritage has grown in the past five years and there is not enough supply to satisfy it. I look under the Christmas tree not so much to wish for things I will never get, but to rue the things that got away. I guess one should just be happy for life, family and friends that are the real gifts we won't find in a box under the tree.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

'Lagay'

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

CAN CORRUPTION BE MEASURED?

Realistically, you can't expect corruption to be surveyed like the Gross National Product, with people going around trying to get the total peso or dollar value of bribes that are paid. So, Transparency International, a group based in Germany, uses the next best thing, which are perceptions. Its best known survey is the Corruption Perceptions Index, which brings together ratings mainly from expatriate business people. The index is released with a ranking of countries.

Less well known is TI's Global Corruption Barometer, which looks more at how corruption affects ordinary people. The 2006 Barometer is particularly interesting because it probes into what TI calls "petty bribery": How often does the common *tao* pay bribes, and to whom. In addition, TI asked how citizens perceive their government's anti-corruption efforts.

The latest TI results were released on Dec. 7. One figure worth sharing: 31 percent of Filipinos surveyed felt that the government's fight against corruption was "not effective." That's the good news. Another 23 percent said the government did not fight at all. That's the bad news. Here's more to make your day: 24 percent felt the government did not fight corruption, but actually encouraged it.

Curious about other findings, I went into the TI website (www.ti.de), downloaded the reports and thought I'd share some additional insights I gained by looking at the Barometer.

Sectors

Before going into the Barometer itself, let me talk a bit more about the Corruption Perceptions Index or CPI. The CPI is useful because of the way it ranks countries in the world, but the rankings haven't been changing too drastically over the years, and that makes me worry at times. It's almost as if we're frozen in those rankings, doomed forever to remain corrupt. It seems almost like some kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, where bribers (in this case, the business people) and bribe-takers (that's us) begin to believe that Filipinos, together with the Indonesians and Vietnamese, are "by nature" the most corrupt among Asians.

The Barometer is more useful in the way it actually surveys men and women on the street, probing into how corruption affects their daily lives. The one limitation the Barometer has is that they could not include countries like China and Vietnam, where ordinary citizens may be less willing to participate in a survey asking them about what they think of government. (Those two countries are included in the Corruption Perceptions Index since expatriate business people can speak out.)

How widespread then is bribe-paying? The TI survey asked people: "In the past 12 months, have you or anyone living in your household paid a bribe in any form?" Globally, the "yes" response was about 9 percent, ranging from a low of 1 percent for Singapore to 60 percent in Morocco. In the Asia-Pacific region, the average was 7 percent. The highest bribe-paying figures in the region came from Pakistan (15 percent), the Philippines (16 percent) and Indonesia (18 percent).

TI also asked people to rate corruption in various sectors and institutions, from a 1 ("not at all corrupt") to 6 ("extremely corrupt"). Here's how Filipinos ranked the sectors and here, I'm going to name them from least to most corrupt: religious bodies (2.1), media (2.5), NGOs (2.6), medical services (2.9), utilities (2.9), education (3.0), registry and permit systems (3.2), legal system/judiciary (3.4), the military (3.4), tax revenue (3.7), political parties (3.8), parliament/legislature (3.9), police (3.9).

The ratings came very close to my own expectations, with some cheering for the low corruption ratings given to the media, NGOs and medical services. In Eastern European countries for example, the medical sector is perceived to be very corrupt.

On the other hand, we do suffer in the area of licenses and permits, the courts, the lawmakers and the law enforcers, which is just about everything else. We may shrug our shoulders about the bribes paid to get permits, but when corruption affects building permits, we're talking here about many lives being put at risk. Think, too, of the people behind the wheels of trucks and buses, with a license, yes, but never having been tested on driving skills or knowledge of traffic rules.

Asking why

The Barometer should get us thinking not just about the impact of corruption but, even more importantly, why we have corruption. We hear reasons like "lack of values" and "low government salaries," with exhortations to pray more and increase government salaries.

The Barometer helps to alert us to other facets of corruption. We see bottlenecks in the permits and licenses sector, and here I wonder at times if it's corruption alone. For Juan and Juana de la Cruz, just filling out a government form can be most intimidating. The solution? They look for friends of neighbors of relatives of someone working in City Hall to help out. And if they don't know anyone, then look for the fixers.

Bureaucracies and bureaucratic procedures feed into corruption in many ways. Even the tediousness of the procedure, for a civil servant, can lead to corruption, with the way it numbs the civil servants, working on the same forms day in and day out. Eventually, they end up calloused, and develop a sense of entitlement for little gifts (especially around Christmas), which grows as they climb the bureaucratic ladder.

I'm hoping some of my anthropology graduate students will eventually look into the anatomy of *lagay*. I wonder at times if Filipinos even equate *lagay* with bribe, which is why social scientists will need to probe more as well into other terms such as "*pang-merienda*," "*pamasahe*" (transportation) even "*pang-sigarilyo.*" I wouldn't dismiss them totally as euphemisms for bribes; they also carry a sense of entitlement and reciprocity on the part of the briber and the bribe-taker. In cultures like our own, there's also that gray area between gifts and bribes, which is why the Civil Service Commission has to warn government people every Christmas not to even say "Merry Christmas," lest this be misinterpreted as a solicitation.

I get exasperated with explanations for corruption like "lack of values" because in many cases, corruption is fueled by cherished traditional values. For example, it's "family values" that force civil servants to help out a relative even if the request is outright illegal. And while we complain about corrupt politicians, we forget that our feudal system actually requires them to become corrupt: people expect them to pay for everything from baptisms to burials so what's a bit of vote-buying when elections come around?

Transparency International's choice of the term "barometer" is appropriate. A barometer only warns about bad weather. We should look at how we might use those warnings.

How MNTC is showing the way

IT SEEMS UNBELIEVABLE, BUT the Manila North Tollways Corp. (MNTC) did bring down the toll fees at the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) by an average of 10 percent. Who would have thought that rollbacks are possible in these times of spiraling prices, especially with the advent of the holiday season?

I can still vividly recall having read in the newspapers about the MNTC's declaration during the toll rate fixing process that the NLEX toll fees would be adjusted every two years. Although we were told that the adjustments could go either way, there was the general impression that the changes would always be upward, never downward. I, for one, must admit having had that mistaken notion.

But then the MNTC kept its word and really unwrapped a surprise package on that rollback. I took note of the reason the MNTC cited for adjusting the toll rates—the strengthening of the peso against the dollar.

But I'm sure the MNTC could have simply justified maintaining the rates by giving other reasons: As we say in Filipino, "*Kung ayaw, may dahilan, kung gusto, may paraan* (If one doesn't like to do it, he can always find a reason not to. But if he really wants to do it, he will always find a way to)." The MNTC took the latter option—and we, the motorists, are the winners.

Why can't other businesses follow suit?

—JOANNE C. DE LOS REYES,
Doña Remedios
Trinidad Highway,
Baliuag, Bulacan

Majority rule is not meant to sustain graft and greed

BY USING THE SHEER FORCE OF numbers to sideline the Senate from the constituent assembly and the public from giving its views on Charter change, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's henchmen at the House of Representatives displayed the most shameless brand of dirty politics. They are pushing public patience to the brim.

The pro-administration lawmakers played well their role as trained dogs of a President who has no right at all to rule for lack of a clear mandate. GMA, based on various surveys, is continuously disowned and distrusted by the people because of perceptions that she cheated her way to victory during the 2004 elections.

The way her allies in Congress bastardized even their own rules defied common sense and moral values. There are more pressing needs that the government should address especially at this critical time when the country is still reeling from the devastating effects of typhoons Milenyo and Reming.

Despite the administration's efforts to justify the Cha-cha Express, it has now become clear that all that GMA and her gang in the House wanted was to create—through a Con-ass dictated by their whims and money—a unicameral stamp pad.

In saying that Cha-cha opponents are making so much ado over nothing because it is the people who will later decide (through a plebiscite) the fate of the proposed constitution, they are actually insulting the Filipino people's intelligence. They are practically asking us to forget that they cheated in the 2004 elections, and with that record, a plebiscite gives their bogus Cha-cha a fighting chance.

By using their numbers, they abused and raped the foundation of our democracy. The rule of the majority is a precious feature of our political life as a nation. It was not the majority rule of selfish politicians but the strength of the majority of our people that brought down two oppressive and abusive rulers through "People Power." People power is not a means to abuse power and authority but an instrument to check political excesses, opportunism, oppression and bad governance. Majority rule is not a device to sustain corruption and greed but a tool to ensure transparency, accountability and faithfulness in governance.

Laban ng Masa believes that only through popular and collective actions can the genuine people's reform agenda—jobs and justice; food and freedom; land and liberation—be realized and achieved.

—DR. FRANCISCO NEMENZO JR.,
chair, Laban ng Masa
c/o Institute for Popular
Democracy, 45 Matimtiman St.,
Teachers' Village, Quezon City

PVAO urged to pay long-delayed disability pensions

I WISH TO CONVEY MY FAMILY'S wholehearted support for the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office's (PVAO) unflinching advocacy to the high ideals of responsive and transparent leadership and service.

On this note, may I likewise take this opportunity to tell PVAO administrator Rogelio Dayan that out of 120 veterans in Pigcawayan, Cotabato, only six are alive, all of us now in our late 80s (I'm going to be 88 years old on March 10, 2007).

In connection with the news report headlined "Fading fast, vets press gov't on P42-B back pay," (PDI, 11/12/06) I would like to call the attention of PVAO authorities to the unpaid arrears in our disability pension.

We are hopeful and we firmly believe that Administrator Dayan and the rest of the PVAO officials can very well make a difference in the payment of our long-delayed entitlements, so that even in the remaining few years of our lives, we the veterans, together with our families, will still be able to enjoy the benefits long due us.

—LT. COL. GUILLERMO
D. ALARCON,
506 Magsaysay St.,
Poblacion 3,
Pigcawayan, Cotabato

LETTERS

English is 'the' global language

AS A 68-YEAR-OLD AMERICAN citizen married to a wonderful Filipina for 33 years, I love the Filipino people and their country. By reading the INQUIRER I have gained insights into the current Philippine culture and climate.

The INQUIRER's Nov. 13 issue prompted me to write this letter. The column of Conrado de Quiros reflected an opinion held by the majority of Americans today. The column of Fr. Joaquin Bernas on constitutional issues was very informative. The commentary of Juan Miguel Luz gave me great hope for the future of Philippine education.

The column of Manuel L. Quezon III, on the other hand, confirmed a horrible feeling I have had in the last three weeks of my visit to this country. Most of the young Filipinos I have met cannot understand or speak English very well. My wife, who was educated in the Philippines, understands, writes and speaks English better than I do.

No matter what Filipinos may feel, the more the world "shrinks" into a global village, the more English becomes a major language of communication. Some Filipinos, Spaniards, French, Chinese, Japanese or Germans may not like what I'm saying here, but this is a fact of present-day life. In my opinion, not to teach English to young Filipinos is to make them second-class citizens of the world and to incapacitate them from competing globally in the fields of medicine, business, science and entertainment.

It appears that Quezon does not realize that the citizens of most countries believe in God and country. To put country over God is wrong priority. Such thinking might lead to a ruling class that thinks that killing those who have different opinions is a patriotic act. I don't think most Filipinos would buy this.

—FRANK MUCHALIHI,
Southridge Estates, Tagaytay City

19 years after the MV Doña Paz tragedy

TODAY, WE AGAIN MARK THE death anniversary of those who perished in the world's worst sea tragedy—the sinking of MV Doña Paz, when it collided with an oil tanker off the coast of Mindoro.

It has been 19 years since the death of my parents and a sister. Each year brings painful memories to me and the rest of my siblings. But my family never stops praying and thanking the Lord for wiping the pain from our minds; for setting us free from the trauma we felt; for being there during our times of sorrow and mourning, and most especially for giving us joy and peace in our hearts.

—MAITA ESPINA-ABUNALES,
12 South Susana Homes,
Molino II, Bacoor, Cavite

Militants to raise voice at summit

DESPITE THE DEPLOYMENT OF thousands of policemen to prevent protesters from getting close to the Asean Summit venue to be held in Cebu City in January 2007, nothing will stop our peaceful and militant actions to denounce the anti-people agenda of further economic plunder, militarism and state-sponsored terrorism.

And despite the outrageous threat of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez that activists will be fed to the sharks, church people—especially those belonging to the church groups whose members have become victims of extrajudicial killings (the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, United Church of Christ in the Philippines and United Methodist Church)—will join the national protest delegation to raise their voices on the issues hounding the summit.

In our view, the US-inspired globalization schemes and regional security issues that will be tackled in the Asean Summit are essentially the same anti-people agenda that have been opposed by international activists during Apec summits, GATT-WTO round of talks and other instruments of US economic, geopolitical and military domination. Under the auspices of US globalization and its war on terror, we can never expect the trade or security agreements coming out of the Asean summit to be truly beneficial to the common people.

At the people's expense, the Arroyo administration and the local governments in Cebu are accountable for millions of pesos immorally being spent for the lavish hosting of the Asean Summit. This spending spree is outrageous especially as thousands of rural poor need to rebuild their homes and lives in the face of the massive devastation brought about by supertyphoon Reming.

Indeed, the rottenness of the fraudulent, fascist and oppressive Arroyos, Gonzalez and their minions is too much that even the sharks can't bear to eat them.

Our protest actions will raise the issue of political killings, such as the gruesome murder of Aglipayan Bishop Alberto Ramento as a cause for outrage against the US-backed Arroyo administration. An ecumenical prayer rally for justice will be one of the culminating events of the series of protest actions in Cebu that aim to manifest the Filipino people's resistance to the US-Arroyo plunder and aggression.

—FR. JERRY SABADO, OCarm,
Promotion of Church People's
Response, 879 Edsa, Quezon City

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CharACter more than Charter Change

The Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) is against the present moves to change the Philippine Constitution.

We would have been open to a Constitutional Convention. But with the recent acts in the House of Representatives - making itself a Constituent Assembly without regard for the Senate or the nation as a whole - even if the decision is now to have a Constitutional Convention instead, we feel that the better move is to postpone the changing of the Constitution. It is not that we think the Constitution is perfect. It is not. It needs changes. But the way things are going, we believe that suspicions of vested interests of our legislators would be minimized or avoided if, for now, we just bracket off these moves on Charter change.

CHARACTER, more than Charter, **change** is needed.

Change our charter, and what would we really achieve if we do not also change our character? A Constitution may be the fundamental law of the land, but if we do not also follow the fundamental promptings of our conscience, what will we really have changed?

To be sure, character development is a lifetime task and challenge. And if that is all we do, it may be argued, then we may never get to change our Constitution at all. We agree. But if there is also no desired change in what we believe and how we behave, then Charter Change no matter how beautiful it may seem to be, will not really lead to the betterment of our nation.

We decry the act of the House of Representatives in making itself the Constituent Assembly. We can grant that our legislators may have good intentions. But the impression given by their act is simply arrogance of power and lack of delicadeza. We commend them if, having realized not just the political consequences of their decision but also its moral implications, they now call for a constitutional convention. But we suggest that they and, indeed, we -- all lay aside even the thought of changing our Charter now.

Charter Change now is being presented -- wrongly -- as the equivalent of institutional reform. It is not. And those who are against Charter Change now are being portrayed as against reform. We are not. We are **FOR** reform - but the right ones at the right time. We are for reforms that really help the poor; changes that strengthen democracy; moves that improve politics as it is practiced today. If those rushing Charter Change are really sincere about reforms, then let them first reform the electoral system and restore its trustworthiness - starting with a thorough revamp of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC). Make the 2007 elections truly credible. Then, when the necessary safeguards against self-interest shall have been set, and after a massive education campaign, maybe we can resurrect the plan to change the Constitution. Until then, let the present Charter stay.

In the schools, colleges, and universities that we run we shall continue teaching our students, aside from the curricula they come to us to follow and learn, love for our country, respect for our laws, and willingness to give our best for God and others, beyond interests of self.

We accept that the call for **CHARACTER change** must start with us and must always continue. As we do this, to the nation we pledge our cooperation in everything that is for the good of our people, and we vow vigilance in preventing what may lead to the nation's ills.

We watch and pray, as Jesus in the Agony in the Garden told his disciples, so we do not fall into temptation. We urge our members to pray that we, our legislators, and our nation as a whole may have the humility to ask to be guided by the Holy Spirit and the strength of will to follow His lead. May we not yield to the temptation to make another Constitution for our country but forget to remake the constitution of our hearts.

What we more urgently need to do now is to watch, pray, and work to **change** -- not our Charter but our **CHARACTER**.

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70 Pangasinan fishermen missing

Search is on after huge waves sweep fishing boats

By Gabriel Cardinoza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

DAGUPAN CITY—AT LEAST 70 FISHERMEN FROM a fishing village in Infanta, Pangasinan, were reported missing after their boats were swept by strong winds and battered by big waves on Saturday near the Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea.

Supt. Rey Tamondong, operations officer of the Pangasinan police office, said 31 fishermen were earlier rescued after they were found clinging to their capsized boats by fellow fishermen who survived the disaster.

"We are still hoping to find survivors," Tamondong said.

Two Navy helicopters scoured the area on Tuesday but only one survivor was found, he said.

Charlito Maniago, barangay captain of the fishing village of Cato, said search and rescue operations began only on Tuesday morning.

"I have reported the incident to the police on Dec. 17, but nobody moved," Maniago said.

But Tamondong said authorities only learned of the incident on Monday when a survivor from neighboring Sta. Cruz, Zambales, reported the incident to authorities there.

Tamondong said the fishermen usually spend three to five days fishing before returning to shore so no one could have learned of the incident until the survivor reported the incident to the police.

Maniago said the water was calm when the fishermen set out to sea on the night of Dec. 16.

But at about 10 p.m. that night, strong winds, locally known as "nortada," began to blow and whipped up waves "as tall as mountains."

"Nortada" (northern wind) is felt here between November and February, Maniago said.

"Smaller boats with three to four crew members were crushed, while the bigger ones capsized," he said.

PO2 Rafael Franco, operations officer of the Infanta police, said some of the fishermen managed to paddle to the Scarborough Shoal and sought refuge there.

The Scarborough Shoal is a group of islands, atolls, and reefs in the South China Sea located 130 nautical miles from Infanta.

Maniago said more fishermen could be missing than the estimated 70 because fishermen from neighboring Dasol, Agno and Bolinao towns may have been also in the area at that time.

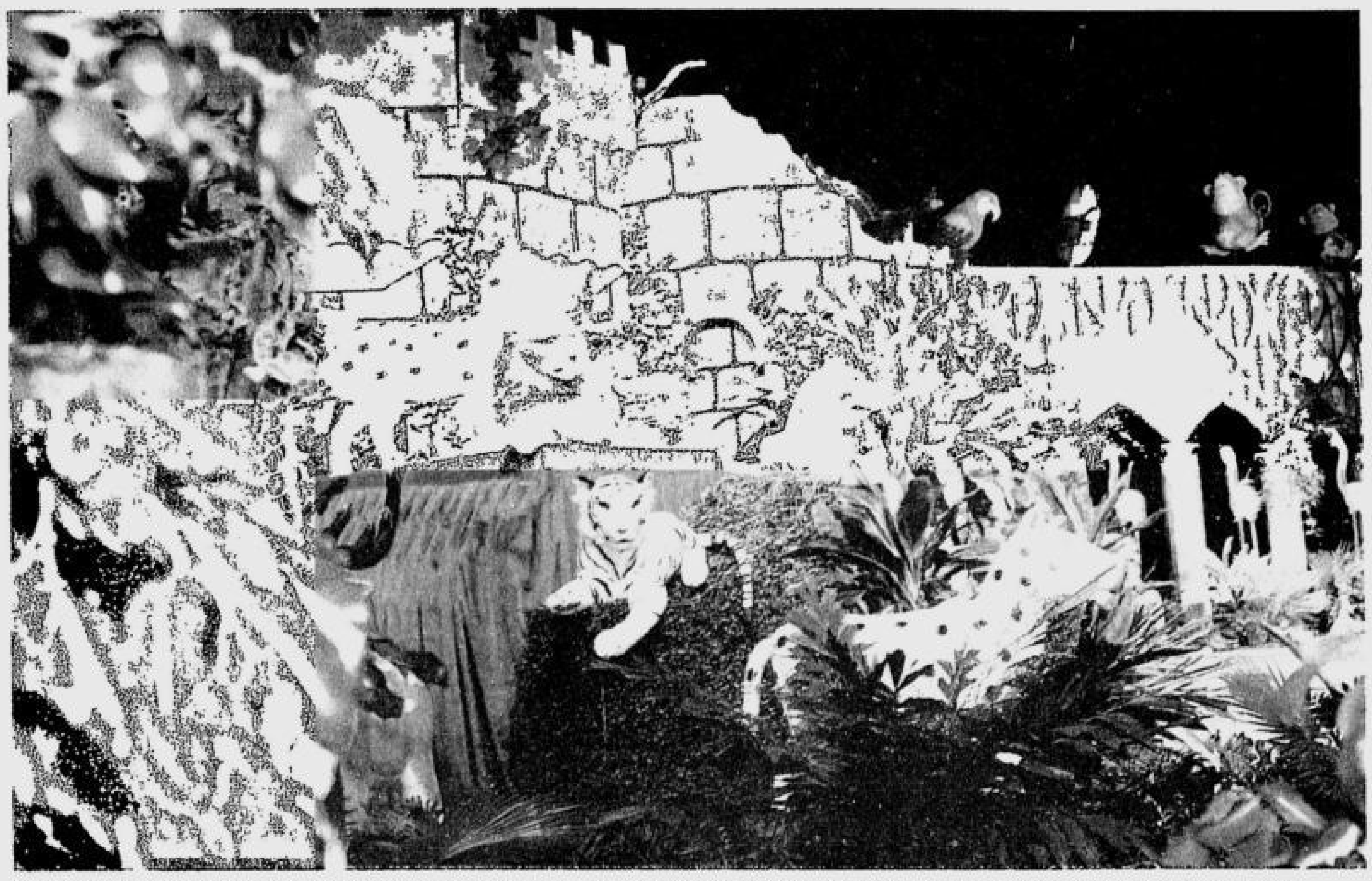
He said two of those rescued were from Agno town.

Tamondong said he had sent out teams to coordinate with barangay officials in the different fishing villages fronting the South China Sea to determine the exact number of survivors and those missing.

In Zambales, Chief Insp. Remigio Magno, Sta. Cruz police chief, said some fishermen fishing 10 km from the shoreline of the town noticed the surge of big waves on the night of Dec. 16, forcing them to return to shore.

Magno said police officials in the province alerted all stations to help in search and rescue operations.

The incident comes in the wake of reports that a new typhoon that was set to make landfall in the country veered from its direction and headed toward Japan, sparing the Philippines from further damage. *With a report from Cesar Villa, Inquirer Central Luzon*



THE STAGE is set for a Christmas party for orphans and teenagers and women who are victims of abuse at the Nueva Ecija Convention Center. The event was organized by the provincial government and Campfarms. ANSELMO ROQUE/INQUIRER CENTRAL LUZON

Ecija holds day of fun for orphans, abuse victims

By Anselmo Roque
Inquirer Central Luzon

PALAYAN CITY—FOR YEARS, Jennie Opre, 19, of Olongapo City, nurtured a longing that she could only show in tears.

Although now living in the relative comfort of the Sta. Marina Omura Home in Cabanatuan City, she still wants to see, or even hear, the voice of her father whom she has never seen.

All that she knows is that her father, United States Navy man Howard Nelson, used to be stationed at the Subic Naval Base and is now living in San Francisco, California. He left the country when she was about to be born on June 26, 1987.

"I don't even have a middle name. My surname is that of my mother's," said Opre, who is an education freshman at the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology in Cabanatuan City.

Ma. Leticia Cabanayan, 18, shares Opre's anguish.

Cabanayan and a younger sister were left in the care of her father, a farmer, when her parents separated when she was seven years old. Unfortunately, her father died a year after the separation and she and her sister were left in the care of her grandmother who also died years later.

Her aunt took care of her and her sister. She was, however, entrusted to the Sta. Marina Omura Home so she could go to school. She is now a sophomore taking an education course at the College of the Immaculate Conception in Cabanatuan.

"There's something lacking in my life. I often cry because of that missing piece," Cabanayan said.

But on Monday, Opre and Cabanayan forgot their pain and sadness, albeit momentary.

They and more than 1,000 children, teenagers and a number of abused women were treated to a day of fun, songs, dances, food and gifts at the Nueva Ecija Convention Center here.

They shrieked, clapped and danced as TV and movie actors Dennis Trillo, Tyrone Perez, Lovi Poe, Yasmien Kurdi, Kathryn Bernardo and Miguel Aguila entertained them.

They watched a magic show and many of them displayed their talents in their group presentations.

The main hall of the convention center was turned into a fantasy land adorned with big balloons, trees with various stuffed animals and lights of different colors.

Music wafted through the hall where a big inflatable dragon and an inflatable "jungle" were also displayed.

Moments later, they were treated to a live display of animals like tigers, tortoise, snakes, among others.

Nueva Ecija Vice Gov. Mariano Cristino Joson initiated the activity with the help of a supporter, Rianne Cuevas of Campfarms located in this city.

"Theirs is a sad life in certain way or another," Joson said. "This was organized to make them very happy ... and to give them hope for a better future."

Joson said at least 20 boys and girls from the different cities and towns in Nueva Ecija were selected by social welfare officers to join the party.

Some of them were orphans while others belonged to poorest families.

The 83 wards of the Bahay ni San Jose Home for God's Special Children in San Antonio town were among those who enjoyed the day. The center takes care of children who were neglected, abandoned or abused by their parents and those orphaned and with physical disabilities.

All 31 residents of the Sta. Marina Omura Home and those from Home for the Girls in Barangay Singalat here, most of them victims of sexual abuse, also joined the activity.

Joson donates his monthly salary to the two orphanages and also provides help to the Home for the Girls, which is run by the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Joson's brother, Gov. Tomas Joson III, said he would also treat children from the different barangays of Cabanatuan City today (Dec. 20, Wednesday) at the newly renovated Freedom Park in Cabanatuan City.

Gunmen shoot Moro militant, abduct him as wounds bleed

DAVAO CITY—A MEMBER OF THE MILITANT Moro group Suara Bangsamoro, who was tagged in the series of terror attacks here, was shot and abducted by three unidentified gunmen in Tagum City early morning Monday, authorities and militant groups said yesterday.

> '...He was profusely bleeding while being dragged outside the house and into one of two vans...'

The van-riding armed men barged into the house of Rahman Camili, 34, in Purok 3 in Barangay Madaum around 2:20 a.m. and forcibly took him away.

Camili was one of the suspects in the 2003 bomb attacks at the airport and the wharf here, which killed at least 24 people, and the 2004 Valentines Day bombing.

He was arrested but was later freed for lack of evidence.

Halima, Camili's wife, said she was roused from sleep by noise in the kitchen and went to check on it.

"I saw three masked men. They asked me who was in the other room but I could not answer them because of fear," she said.

Halima said as her husband was coming out of the room, one of the three gunmen immediately shot him.

She said her husband was hit in the stomach and in the leg.

"He was profusely bleeding while being dragged outside the house and into one of two vans parked outside," she said.

Tagum City Mayor Rey Uy said authorities are still investigating the abduction.

He said he would closely follow the investigation and would make information available as they come in.

But Halima and her husband's colleagues in the Suara Bangsamoro said they have no other suspect but authorities.

"It's too early to speculate on who are behind this incident. We are still looking into the motive of the suspects," Uy said in a television interview.

Based on accounts of witnesses, there were at least two vans with about 20 men parked outside Camili's house at that time. The vehicles bore the same license plates, LFV 678.

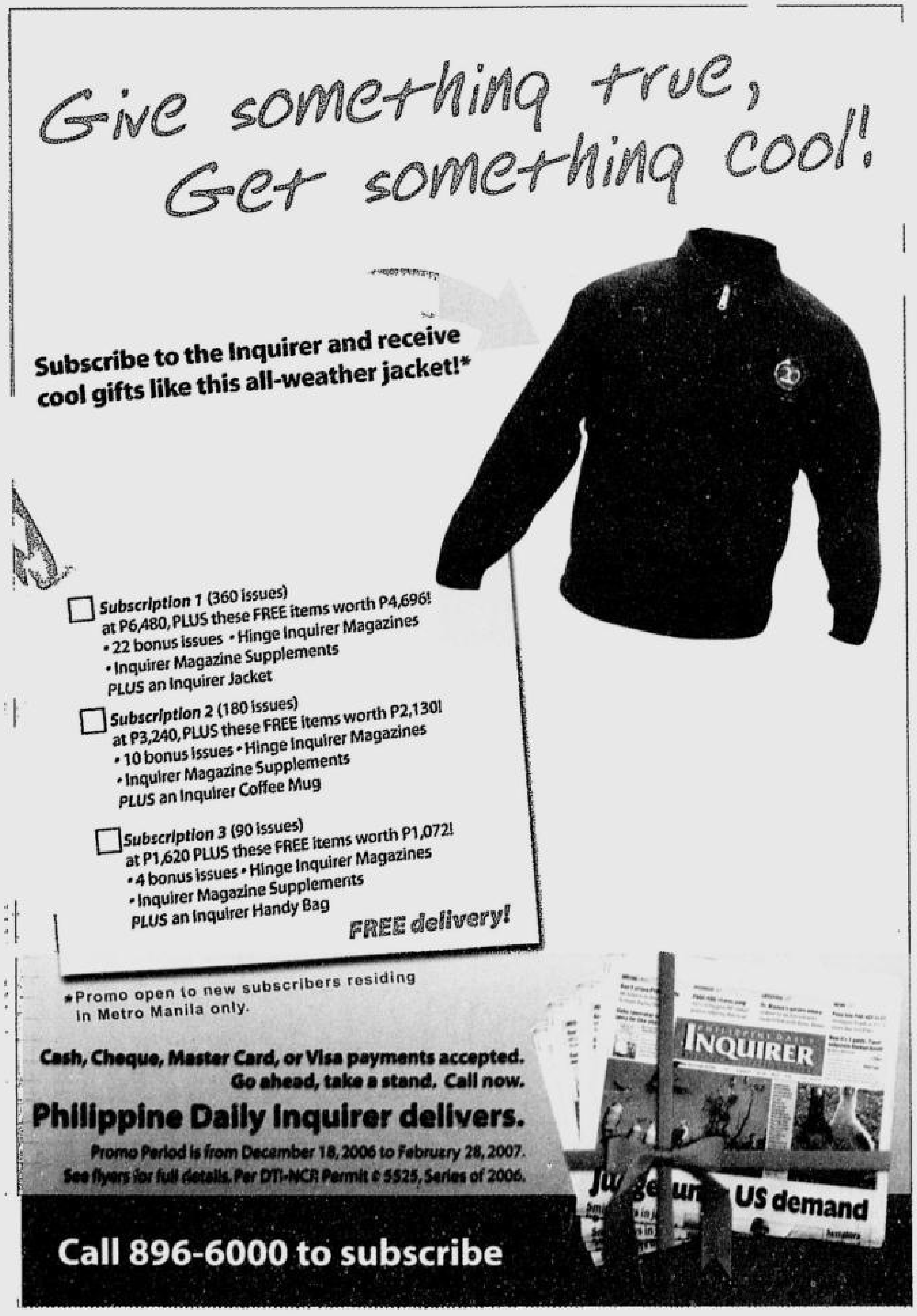
Amirah Lidasan, secretary general of Suara Bangsamoro, said the abduction was part of the government's campaign against individuals or groups critical of its policies.

"Our members have been receiving various threats. We are being tagged as members of the New Peoples Army (NPA). Of course, this is all part of the attempts of the government to stop us from asserting the rights of the Moro people," Lidasan said.

She also cited a recent campaign against Suara Bangsamoro leaders and other militants in Cotabato City.

Lidasan said five militants in Cotabato City were actually tagged as terrorists and their names posted in various parts of the city.

Jeffrey Tupas, Inquirer Mindanao



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INQUIRER Northern Luzon

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FIRST ILOCANOS IN HAWAII

They wanted to go back after 3-week stormy ride

By Frank Cimatu
Candon City

DEC. 20, 1906 WAS A THURSDAY, A WORKDAY, but the atmosphere in the harbor of Honolulu that noon was festive. The vessel, SS Doric, was carrying 15 Ilocanos, whose ages ranged from 15 to 56, some of them wanting to return home after that stormy ride that lasted three weeks.

"The 15 Filipinos brought by Mr. Judd attracted considerable attention when the Doric docked yesterday afternoon. They marched down the gangplank ... one of them carrying a fighting cock under his arm," the Pacific Commercial Advertiser (PCA) wrote 100 years ago.

The unnamed Filipino did not get his gamecock back. He went to Olaa plantation in Oahu with the rest of the Ilocanos, all of them from Candon, Ilocos Sur.

But they were not the first Filipinos on the islands.

As Filipino-American historian Ruben Alcantara noted, three other Filipinos were in the Royal Hawaiian B, which welcomed the Doric. Four more could have jumped ship and were working in the sugarcane plantations at that time.

The arrival of the vessel in Honolulu, and the reason Ilocos and Hawaii are celebrating its centennial with aplomb, represent the first time that Filipinos were finally recruited to work on the islands' sugar plantations.

They were the last group to be called to work in Hawaii. The Chinese came first, followed by the Japanese, Portuguese and Puerto Ricans, as well as Spanish and Korean laborers.

The story of how an American recruiter known as A.F. Judd came to the Philippines, supposedly to recruit 300 Filipinos, had been widely read in the PCA, forerunner of the Hawaii Advertiser. For eight months, Judd had tried in vain to recruit Filipinos.

Finally, Judd was able to sweet-talk some Candon residents who were wandering in the ports of Manila into coming to Hawaii, and things started stirring.

Judd went to Candon and was able to gather 15 men. Five came from the Gironella family—father Simplicio, 56; and sons Mariano, 23; Vicente, 19; Francisco, 18; and Antonio, 15.

Francisco, incidentally, was the group's interpreter, having studied under the Thomasites. The sets of brothers were Mauricio, 21, and Celestino Cortez, 19; and Cecilio, 27, and Prudencio Sagun, 29. The rest were Julian Galmen, 20; Martin de Jesus, 22; Apolonio Ramos, 26; Marcelino Bello, 28; Filomeno Rebollido, 30; and Emilio Dasalla, 30.

"The newcomers are all small men, smaller than the Japanese who come here, but they are an intelligent looking lot. All are young men, most of them under 20 years old and all look very wiry and willing," the PCA wrote.

"Willing" was an apt term because they persevered despite the small pay they got and the hard work they put in the sugarcane fields. Through perseverance, Filipinos eventually dominated the industry and Hawaiian affairs.

From the original 15, there are now about 40,000 Hawaiians of Filipino heritage. Ilocano is now being taught in the University of Hawaii. Most Filipino-Americans who won in the midterm elections in November were from Hawaii.

"I am happy that when people now trace the history of Filipinos in Hawaii, they think of Candon," said Ilocos Sur Rep. Eric Singson.

When President Macapagal-Arroyo went to Olaa to unveil the *sacada* (seasonal sugar worker) marker, Singson was surprised that he was asked to deliver a speech in behalf of his town mates. The celebration of the Feria Exposicion in Candon was held on Dec. 3 in honor of the *sacada*.

Hawaii Consul General Ariel Abadilla and Education Secretary Jesli Lapus unveiled the life-size statue sculpted by Outstanding Young Persons of the World awardee Juan Sajid Imao.

A 15-piece sculpture of the 15 original sacada made by Baguio City-based Kigao Rosimo was presented this week to Abadilla as Candon's present to the Hawaiian people.

BUILT by Juan Sajid Imao, this monument to the "sacada" commemorates the centennial of the first wave of Filipinos who were recruited to work in the United States in 1906. EONCIO BALB

A self-discovery

WHEN Baguio-based artist Kigao Rosimo was commissioned to sculpt the first 15 *sacada* (plantation workers) to work in Hawaii's sugarcane fields 100 years ago, he decided to read as many articles that told their story.

BAGUIO sculptor Kigao Rosimo creates several "sacada" statuettes, which the Candon city government donated to Hawaii to commemorate the centennial of the arrival of Filipino workers in the United States. EV ESPIRITU

The story of the sacada who brought with him his favorite "*pampal-lot*" or gamecock throughout the journey was the one that stuck to his mind. It was the first statue he molded.

The image eventually came out, his right hand holding a straw hat clutching his heart and his left holding the proud rooster. His *tampipi* (native chest) is on his side.

"I decided to capture the moment when they just arrived from the boat. There is fear and sense of adventure in them," Rosimo said.

Because he was still working with clay, his figures changed whenever there is a new article on the sacada that he would read.

When the INQUIRER wrote about the big leather and wood chest that the family of Mauricio Cortez had with them, he also came out with his figure carrying that luggage.

Because that expensive chest could have not been bought by Cortez at that time, Rosimo decided that he was acting as a porter of A.F. Judd, the American who recruited them back home.

He portrayed Simplicio Gironella and his 15-year-old son, Antonio, praying and with the old man carrying a rosary.

Most of them were wearing oversized clothes because Rosimo noted that Judd actually bought "*ukay-ukay*" or used clothes for them in Tokyo. It was December then and was freezing cold.

Brothers Cecilio and Prudencio Sagun, who never wrote back to their relatives because they both could not read and write, are portrayed squatting idly.

Rosimo said making the figures also brought him to his own self-discovery.

"When I was doing my sculptures, I mentioned to my father about these sacada all coming from Candon (Ilocos Sur). 'That's where we also came from,' he said. I did not know about that," he said.

When he went to Candon, he looked for his relatives and connected with his roots. The sculptures, which were eventually made from marble resin, were eventually brought to Honolulu where they are now displayed at the Philippine consulate. *Frank Cimatu*

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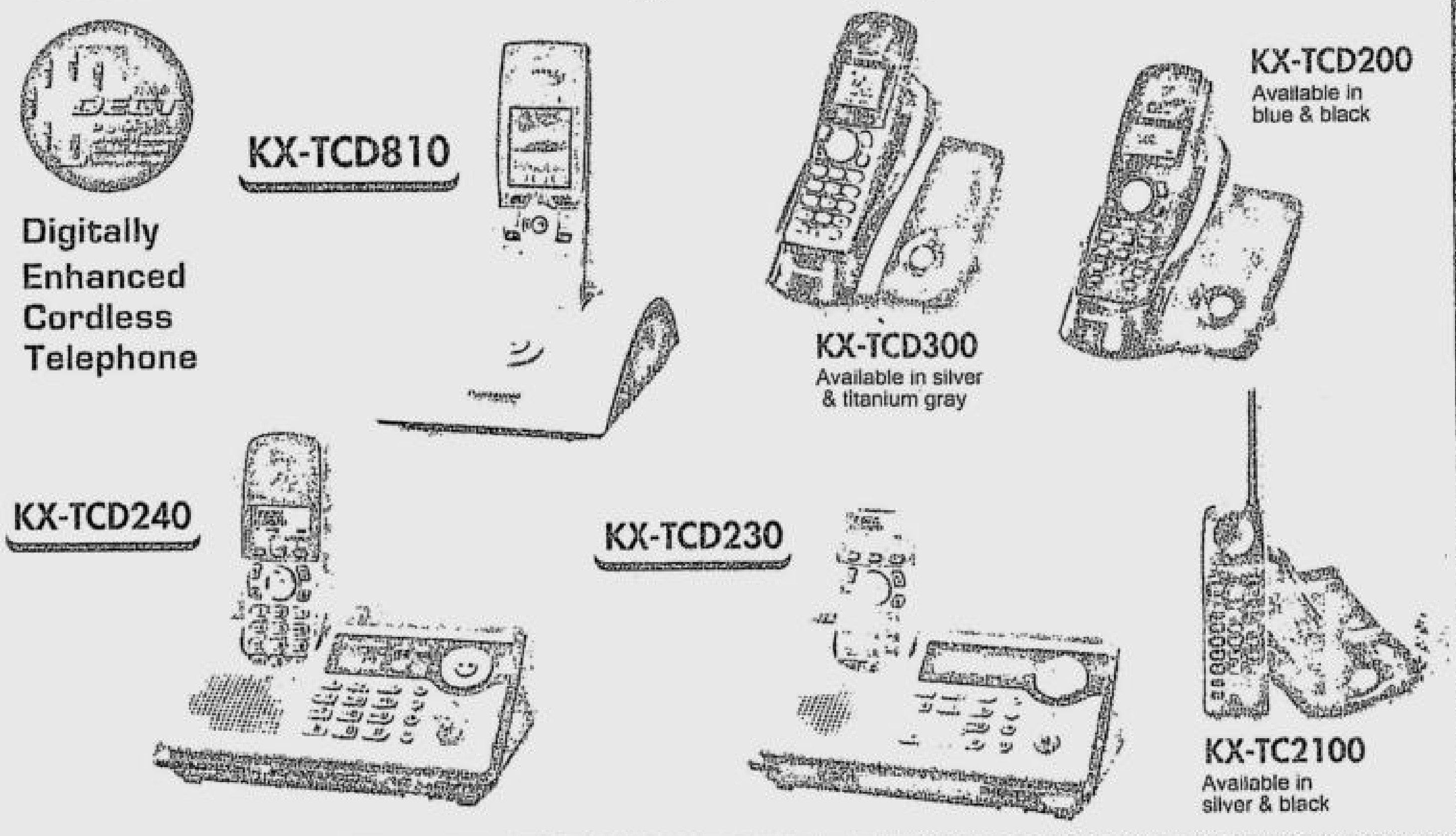
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GMA talks Cha-cha anew; Defensor warns of disaster

From page A1

"WITH URGENCY AND FERVOR," is how President Arroyo describes her renewed pursuit of Charter change in her speech at the 40th anniversary of the Asian Development Bank on Tuesday. EDWIN BACASMAS

The Supreme Court in October rejected the people's initiative campaign as marked by fraud. Last week, Ms Arroyo's allies in the House of Representatives backed off from the Con-ass option in the face of strong opposition from the Roman Catholic Church.

Thanking the ADB for its support for her administration's reforms, Ms Arroyo said she intended to "continue all reforms beyond our tax reforms."

Three realities

"We assure you that all our reforms go through democratic procedures, including our political reforms," the President told ADB officials.

Saying she wanted to take the opportunity to speak about Charter change (Cha-cha), Ms Arroyo pointed out "three realities we face as a nation."

"One, that the people accept the need for Charter change to overhaul the system; two, that there is a need for a unified national consensus on the means and timetable; and three, that this is a platform commitment of the administration that will be pursued with urgency and fervor," she said.

Need for transparency

She said these three realities "will continue to shape our actions for the better future of the Philippines—working closely and inclusively with all stakeholders and institutions; observing transparency; and backing up the entire process with a strong economy, social payback and values programs."

"This is a matter of paramount national interest and our leaders must rise to the challenge," Ms Arroyo stressed.

In a phone interview, Defensor said that pushing Cha-cha through by any mode—people's initiative, or constituent assembly or through a constitutional convention (where delegates will be elected)—before next May's elections would be "nothing short of disastrous" for the President.

GMA ill-advised?

"As members of the Cabinet, we should be protecting the interest of the President rather than leading her down the road to perdition," he said.

Defensor has been one of few dissenters in the Cabinet that has been dominated by members of the ruling Lakas party, the political machinery behind the rush to change the Constitution.

Defensor reckoned Ms Arroyo might have been ill-advised to revive discussions on Cha-cha so soon after last Sunday's prayer rally led by Catholic Church leaders opposed to Con-ass or to any attempt at Cha-cha at this time.

Defensor, a member of the Liberal Party, said Charter change had been "vigorously opposed by the public."

No Palace timetable

A Cha-cha dissenter, former Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz, had been forced to resign due to pressure from the pro-Charter change Lakas faction in the Cabinet.

"We already know how the public feels about forcing the issue on Charter change now. We really can't go against public opinion on this," Defensor said.

Ms Arroyo's political adviser, Gabriel Claudio, said the Palace would not prescribe a timetable for the new Charter change campaign.

'We'll get the consensus'

"What is certain is that there will be midterm elections in May 2007," Claudio told the INQUIRER. "On that, there should at least be some degree of unanimity."

Asked if Malacañang would still pursue Cha-cha if it failed to obtain national consensus, Claudio said: "We're not contemplating that possibility, that there will be no consensus. If we try hard enough, we should have that consensus."

In a phone interview, Claudio said the President's message was that the administration's Cha-cha advocacy "has never been partisan, whimsical or self-serving."

Step in right direction

He said that Charter change was a part of Ms Arroyo's platform commitment during the 2004 election and she had continued to push for it since.

Claudio also said that Cha-cha was part of the Arroyo administration's Medium Term Development Plan and "people should not turn their backs on this vision because it is a cause that is not only legitimate but valid and necessary."

He said that a "step on the right direction" was Speaker Jose de Venecia's proposal for political parties and members of Congress to talk with the Church, other religious groups and civil society.

"That is not for Malacañang to prescribe," Claudio said when asked how soon the Palace wanted Charter change done.

"The avenues for changes in the Constitution are in the hands of the people either directly or through Congress," he added.

Elections to push through

Asked whether Malacañang preferred it before or after the May 2007 polls, Claudio said that what was important was that this would have "public acceptability and consensus."

He also said the midterm elections, including the senatorial elections, would push through next May.

It's Christmas in jail for Smith; CA nixes TRO

From page A1

mented and the petitioner is now confined thereat," the court said.

It also ordered Smith's camp to provide the lawyers of "Nicole," the Filipino woman whom the US Marine had been convicted of raping, a copy of his petition.

Within 10 days

The appellate court also ordered Pozon, presiding judge of the Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 139, the Makati City Jail warden, and Nicole to comment on Smith's petition within 10 days of receipt of the copy of the petition.

It directed the Office of the Solicitor General to submit its comment within the same time frame.

It said it would decide on the issue after the submission of all the documents.

In his petition for certiorari, Smith through his lawyers led by Jose Justiniano asked the court to nullify Pozon's Dec. 13 order denying his motion seeking the recall of the judge's commitment order.

The soldier maintained that under Section 6, Article V of the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement, his custody remained with the US government until completion of all judicial proceedings related to the rape case filed against him.

He said Pozon committed grave abuse of discretion and acted without jurisdiction in ordering his confinement at the Makati City Jail.

He added that under the VFA, custody over US military personnel facing criminal charges in the Philippines should be mutually agreed upon by US and Philippine authorities.

Smith's lawyers had sought the immediate issuance of a TRO on Pozon's Dec. 13 order.

On Monday, Nicole also asked the appellate court to let the Supreme Court decide on Smith's petition.

Muntinlupa

Smith, 21, has been held at the Makati City Jail since his rape conviction on Dec. 4.

But Supt. Serafin Barretto, regional director of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, yesterday said the BJMP as administrator of the city jail would ask Pozon's court to transfer the soldier to the custody of the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) if his plea for custody remained unsettled until next week.

Smith is the lone convict at the city jail, which is a detention facility for crime suspects still facing trial.

"We are already breaking the law here. He should be brought to Muntinlupa," Barretto said in a phone interview.

According to Barretto, ordinary convicts are by law brought to a BuCor facility such as the New Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa immediately after being found guilty of a crime and sentenced to serve time.

"If [the petition is still unresolved] by next week, we will submit a manifestation for Judge Pozon to issue an order for [Smith] to be brought to the [BuCor]," Barretto said, adding:

"But if the US and Philippine governments will have an agreement on where he should be held, we will follow that."

Diplomatic approach

Sought for comment, Smith's lead lawyer Justiniano said a "diplomatic approach" could remedy such a move, should the BJMP pursue it.

He said transferring Smith to a BuCor facility would be "in contravention" of Pozon's commitment order.

Pozon had ruled that "the custody of accused Smith by the US military authorities was terminated after the completion of the trial and rendition of [a] judgment of conviction."

He dismissed Smith's argument that, based on the VFA, he should remain under American watch until the completion of judicial proceedings, including appeal.

He further justified his decision to commit Smith to the local jail instead of the national penitentiary, by saying that this was in compliance with the VFA.

As in his Dec. 4 ruling, Pozon maintained in his Dec. 13 order that Smith's detention at the city jail was temporary and only until Philippine and US authorities agreed on which local facility he should serve his sentence of up to 40 years.

Smith's new quarters

Barretto said Smith was transferred this weekend from the city jail's records section to a smaller room.

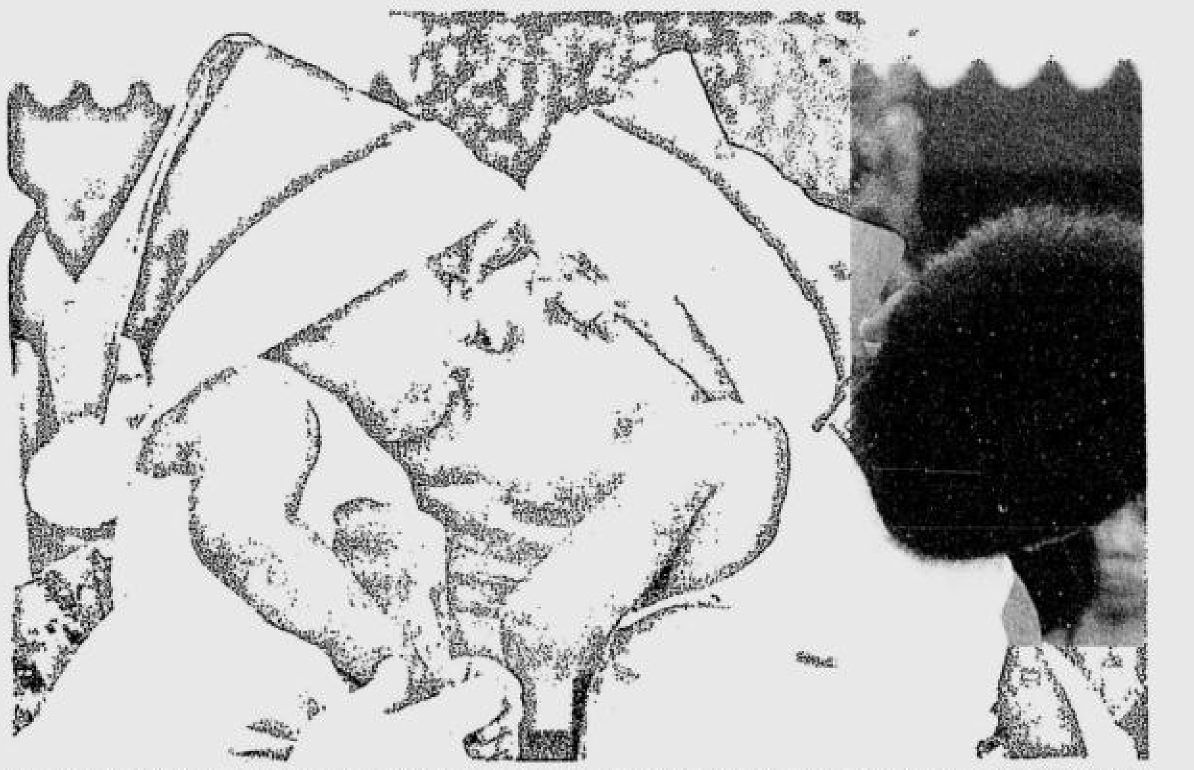
"He was transferred to an old stock room that has long been empty. He has been [at the records section] for so long and [his presence] disrupts operations of the warden there," Barretto said.

He said jail personnel worked on clerical matters in the office where Smith had stayed.

Barretto described Smith's new quarters as measuring around four square meters, more humid than the records section, with an electric fan, a permanently shut window and a door that was always locked.

The room, once used as an office of the female jail warden, was a short walk away from the separate jail cells for female inmates and right behind the jail's firing range, Barretto said, adding:

"We implement the same security [arrangements] for him though it is hotter in the room because the walls are solid concrete. He still has visitors from the US Embassy and his lawyers, but they cannot [stay] long like before because it is really hot inside the room."



CHARM OFFENSIVE: An American Marine of the 3rd Expeditionary Brigade cuddles the wards of Our Lady of Peace in Parañaque during the gift-giving of American servicemen led by US envoy Kristie Kenney. RYAN LIM

Justiniano said the room would get crammed with four or five inside. He said a mattress, which he guessed was brought by Smith's American guards, was laid on the floor.

"He asks me when his petition before the Court of Appeals will be resolved, and I tell him that I can't answer that. But somehow, his spirits are lifted whenever he gets letters and gifts from his supporters," Justiniano said.

Evalyn Ursua, Nicole's lawyer, said it would be correct to commit Smith to the national penitentiary.

"He should be detained there. In fact, there is more space in Bilibid than at the city jail," Ursua said.

Act now

Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago said the appellate court should first act on Smith's petition before deciding to transmit it to the Supreme Court to avoid damaging RP-US relations.

"The Court of Appeals should act now before the detention issue becomes a major irritant. After that, it can transmit the case to the Supreme Court," said Santiago, chair of the bicameral Legislative Oversight Committee on the VFA.

Under the Rules of Court, the appellate court can issue a 60-day TRO, "even without hearing, to avoid grave injustice and irreparable damage to RP-US relations," she said.

Santiago, an international law expert, a former trial court judge, and the chair of the Senate committee on foreign relations, said the transfer of the case from the appellate court to the Supreme Court might have "a dilatory effect."

But she pointed out that "justice delayed is justice denied."

Definitions

Santiago also said the issue of custody depended on the interpretation of the phrase "completion of all judicial proceedings" in the VFA.

Black's Law Dictionary defines judicial proceeding as "any proceeding where judicial action is invoked and taken; or the course prescribed to be taken in various cases for the determination of a controversy," according to Santiago.

The legal reference book, "Words and Phrases," quoting from the US case of Richeson v Kessler, specifies that the term "judicial proceedings" is "not limited to trials, but includes every proceeding of a judicial nature before a court clothed with judicial power," she said.

"The argument that the end of trial constitutes completion of all judicial proceedings, leads to the absurd conclusion that an appeal to the Supreme Court is not a judicial proceeding. That is *argumentum ad absurdum*, meaning it is an argument that leads to absurd conclusion," she said. *With a report from TJ Burgonio*

Airlines' wish for all seasons: Quiet at Naia

From page A1

The Airline Operators Council (AOC) once again plans to propose the "silent airport" concept to the airport authority, AOC chair Leoncio Nakpil said yesterday.

"We want to encourage this for the simple reason that the Naia is too congested and passengers want a relaxing atmosphere at the airport when they arrive or before they leave," Nakpil told the INQUIRER.

Announcements are constantly heard all over the Naia terminal—from flight information details, reminders and even promotions for an ongoing raffle promo for arriving Filipino passengers—at least every five minutes, leaving practically no quiet moment at the airport.

Countless announcements

And with the holiday season, piped-in Christmas music is played almost the entire day.

A staff at the Naia flight paging information office told the INQUIRER that the airport authority's Christmas raffle promo was being announced three times per arriving flight daily, aside from the regular announcements of flight arrivals and departures.

Asked how many announcements were made in a day, the staff, who requested anonymity, shrugged and said, "I lose count."

Introducing the silent airport concept in international airports in Southeast Asia is among the projects of the Asean AOC, which the Philippine AOC currently chairs.

Patrick Francis, head of the Airline Operators Committee in Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), told the INQUIRER that his own group was also discussing with the Malaysian airport authority the implementation of the silent airport at the KLIA.

Cultural issues

But "cultural issues" come into play, as "Malaysians are used to hearing their names being called," Francis said.

Nevertheless, Francis said, the number of announcements at the KLIA had already been reduced.

"Airports shouldn't have all these constant noise," said Francis, whose group was in Manila for a meeting with the Philippine AOC.

More than a year ago, the AOC broached the idea of a "silent airport," but the Manila International Airport Authority (Miaa) had said the proposal would have to be carefully evaluated first.

Stressful

The AOC pointed out that flying could be stressful for several passengers, and that having a "silent airport" would help them rest and relax while waiting for their flights, or upon arriving.

This is a concept already being adopted by many international airports worldwide, Nakpil said.

"We should learn to educate passengers," Nakpil said. "A lot of Filipino passengers actually get left behind in airports in other countries because they are so used to having their flights paged."

Nakpil said that the concept could be implemented gradually at the Naia until "passengers get used to it."

Hard-up guard returns ₱500,000

From page A1

"The thought of running away with the money never occurred to me, though some of my friends were urging me to do so," said Bacod, a watchman of Grandeur Security Service Corp. stationed at Valencia Hills Condominium.

"I don't know why, but I was never tempted. Returning people's belongings is part of my job, so I did my job," he said in Filipino.

On Nov. 4, Bacod found a belt bag containing a wad of P500 bills amounting to P34,500, and a bundle of US dollar bills worth $10,000 in the condominium lobby.

He immediately brought the matter up with his superiors, and they tracked down the owner, who turned out to be a man staying at the same building.

Bacod said that when he went to return the money, the man whom condominium security officials identified as Adiong Alento Mamintal Jr. was profuse in thanking him—and then was soon on his way.

Unsoiled reward

Ten minutes later, the man, who said he was about to go on an overseas trip, called Bacod back and handed him P2,000 as a reward.

It was a mere fraction of the amount he had returned, but at least it was guilt-free. Bacod said he was more than happy to accept it.

Bacod, who is separated from his wife, told the story to his children, 7-year-old Mark Kevin and 6-year-old Jemar, who are both in his custody.

A FEW GOOD MEN: Security guard Jorge Bacod, 27, assigned at Tower C of the Valencia Condominium in Quezon City belongs to the country's finest. JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

Importance of being honest

The children had stopped schooling after their parents separated. Bacod and the kids are now sharing a small apartment with three other families.

"I want my children to live by my example. I hope when they're older they'll realize the importance of being honest," Bacod told the INQUIRER.

"If I had kept the money, I would have been able to buy a lot of things. But who knows what that would cost me in the long run."

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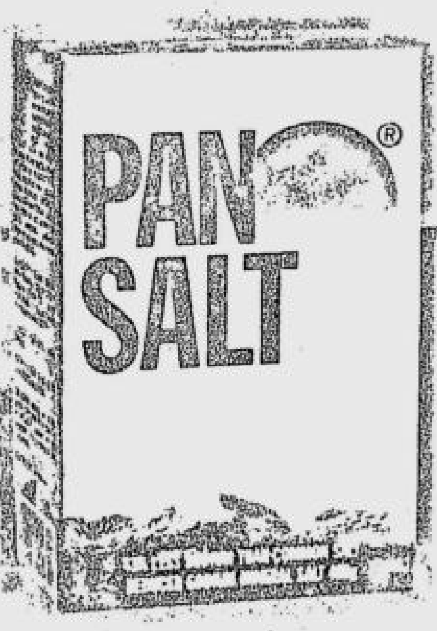

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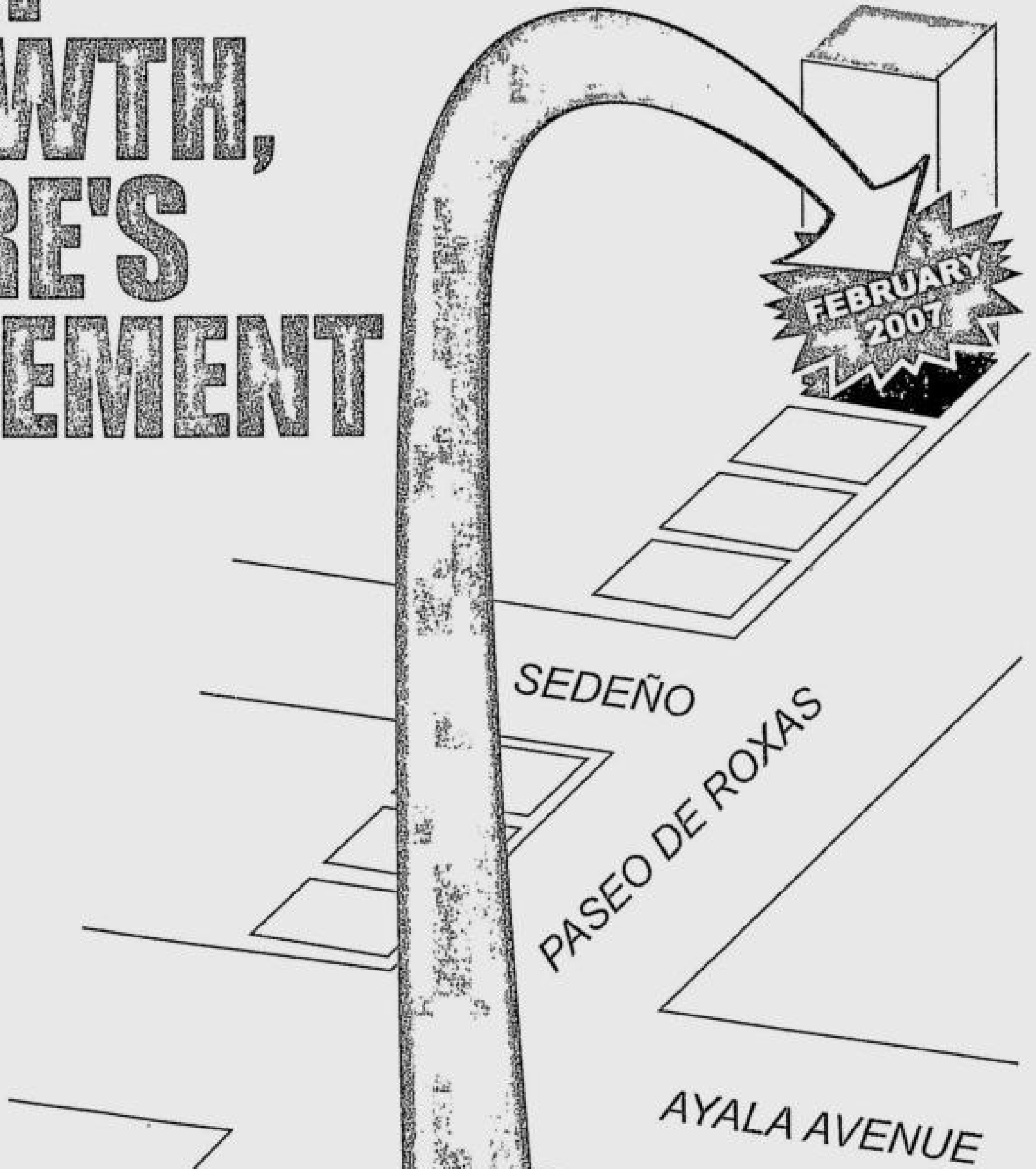

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More Pinoys hungrier now, survey says

A RECORD 3.3 MILLION HOUSEHOLDS HAVE reported experiencing hunger at least once in the past three months, according to the latest survey of the Social Weather Stations.

For the 11th consecutive quarter (since June 2004), hunger incidence among households remained at double-digits, reaching a new record high of 19 percent, surpassing the previous record of 16.9 percent reached in both September and March this year, according to the final 2006 SWS survey conducted last Nov. 24 - 29.

The survey also found more than half of the families (52 percent) calling themselves "poor in general" and 40 percent saying they were "poor in terms of food."

Moderate hunger, defined as households who went hungry "only once" or "a few times" in the last three months, rose to 15.1 percent—another record high, up from 12.3 percent last September. It surpassed the previous record of 12.9 percent posted in August 2005.

Severe hunger, defined as going hungry "often" or "always" in the last three months, was down to 3.9 percent, from 4.6 percent in September.

Moderate hunger rose in Metro Manila (from 8.2 percent to 12.7 percent) and in Luzon (from 10.3 percent to 14.7 percent). It also increased slightly in Visayas (from 13.7 percent to 15.3 percent) while it remained steady in Mindanao at 17.3 percent.

Meanwhile, severe hunger increased in Metro Manila (from 4.6 percent to 5 percent) and in Mindanao (from 4 percent to 5 percent) but decreased in Luzon (from 4.3 percent to 3 percent) and in Visayas (from 6 percent to 3.7 percent).

The over-all self-rated poverty hardly changed nationwide, from 51 percent in September to 52 percent in November.

The Median Self-Rated Poverty Threshold, or the median monthly budget needed by self-rated poor households "to escape poverty" rose from P10,000 to P12,000 in Metro Manila.

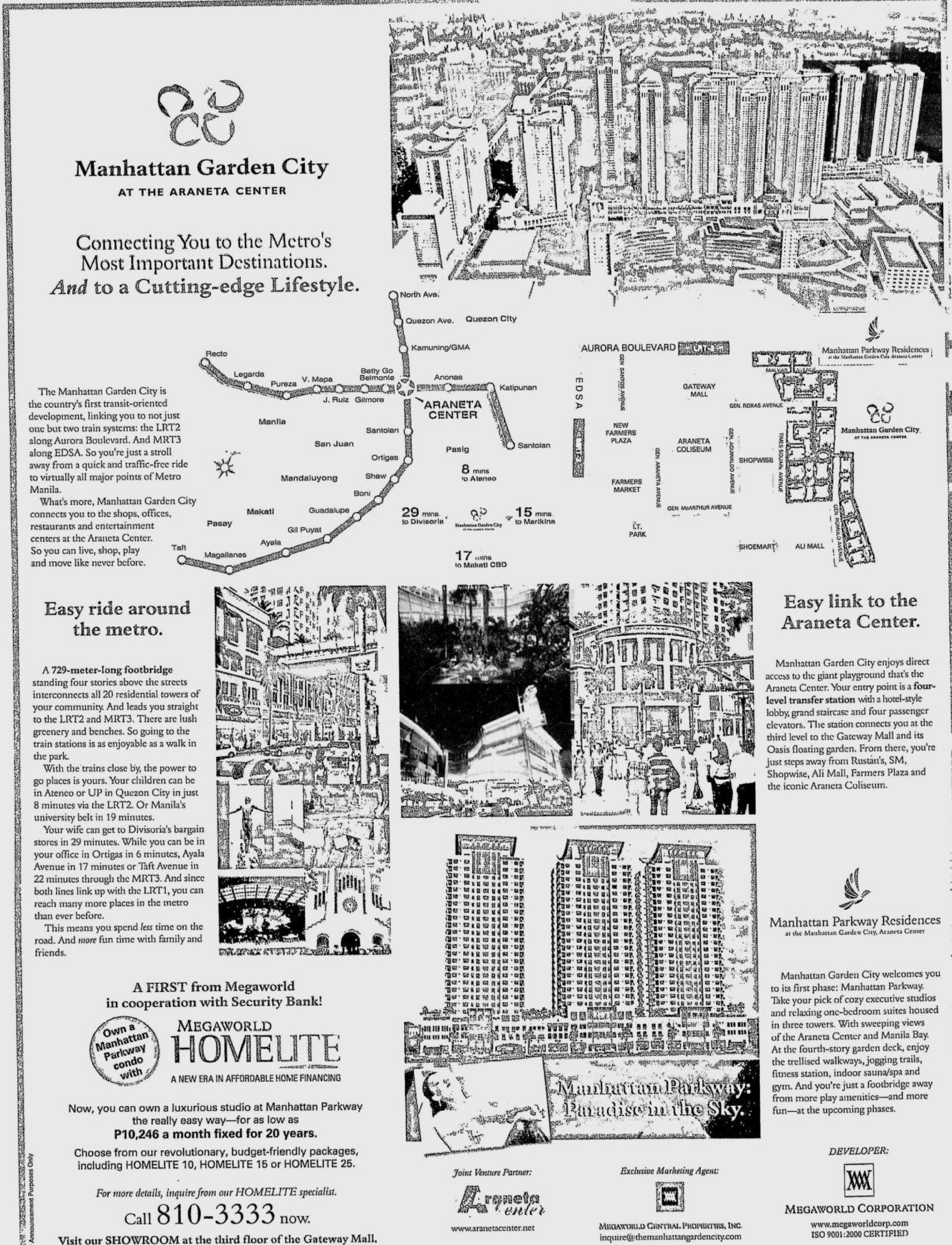
The threshold, however, declined from P6,000 to P5,000, while it remained steady in Visayas and Mindanao at P6,000 and P5,000, respectively.

Meanwhile, four in 10 Filipino households (40 percent) considered themselves "poor," based on the type of food their family ate, as 27 percent put themselves on the "borderline," and 32 percent considered themselves as "not food-poor."

The survey also showed that among those who rated themselves "food-poor," 30 percent said they had experienced hunger in the past three months, whereas among those who rated themselves "poor in general," 25 percent said they had experienced hunger in the last three months.

"The long survey experience shows that household heads' reports about poverty in general, poverty in terms of food, and hunger are internally consistent," SWS said in a statement.

The survey was conducted between Nov. 24-29 using face-to-face interviews of 1,200 statistically representative household heads (300 each in Metro Manila, the rest of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao). It had a margin of error of plus-or-minus 3 percentage points. *Kate Pedroso, Inquirer Research*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Woman with ₱.5M shot dead by robbers

Victim carrying payroll money killed in front of her 2 children

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THREE ROBBERS SHOT DEAD A 34-YEAR-OLD woman in front of her two children in Mandaluyong City yesterday afternoon before escaping with P500,000 in payroll money.

The bullet which hit Maribel Divino in her right shoulder also pierced her lungs, police said.

Based on initial police reports, Divino, her two children and a company driver were on board a Toyota Land Cruiser at about 1:45 p.m. when the incident occurred.

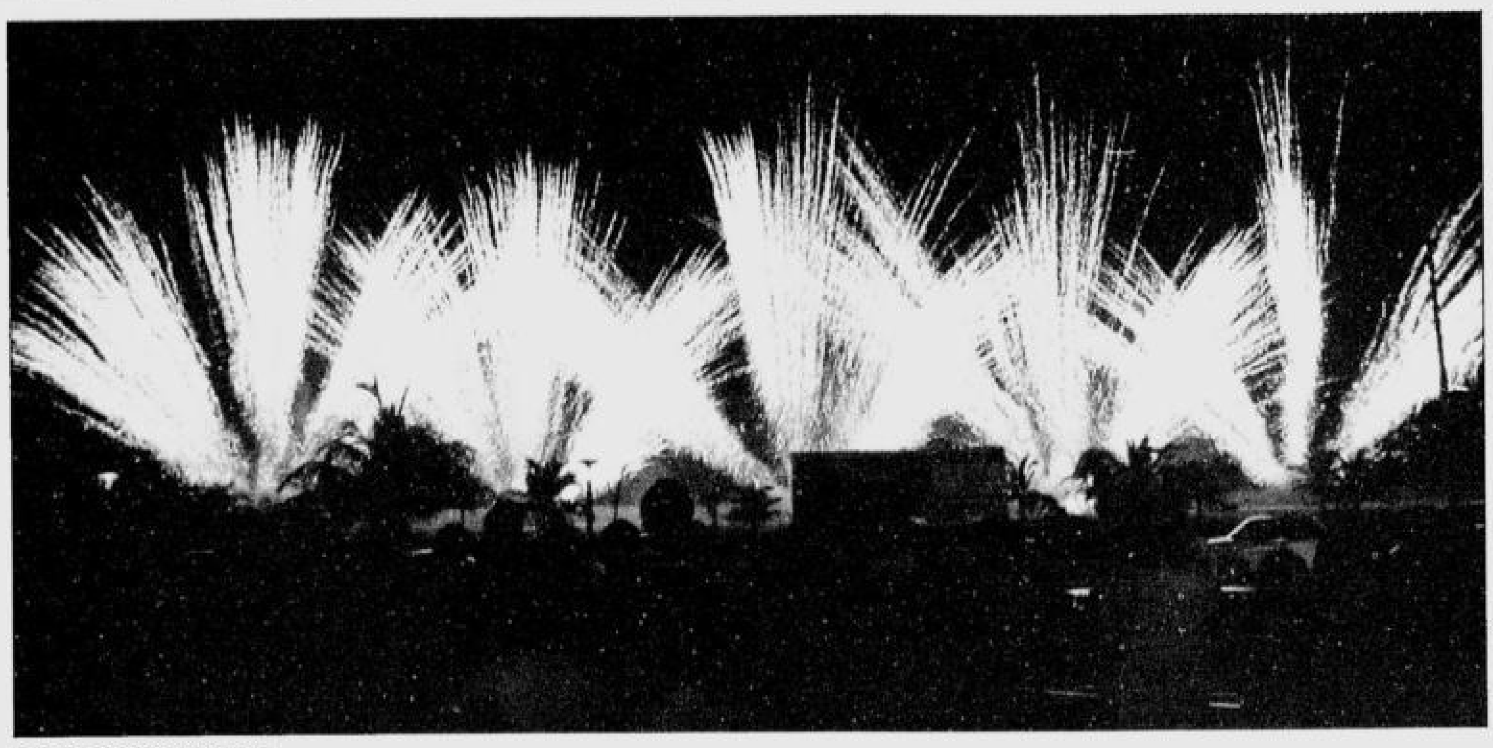
Divino, who the police said was a secretary of Bitangcol Construction, had just withdrawn money from a Land Bank branch in Pasig City.

As the Land Cruiser stopped at the usually clogged corner of Shaw Boulevard near Pilar Street, three men wielding .45 caliber handguns on board a motorcycle blocked the vehicle.

Suddenly, the three men opened fire at the Cruiser as two of them got off the motorcycle. One smashed the glass window on the driver's side while the other broke the window on the passenger's side where Divino was seated, Mandaluyong police chief Supt. Ericson Velasquez told the INQUIRER.

Divino managed to throw her bag containing the cash outside the vehicle, according to witnesses, but one of the suspects fired at her.

The robbers quickly fled with the cash while Divino was brought to the Lourdes Hospital where she died at 2:50 p.m.



PASAY LIGHTS UP
Mall goers in Pasay City are treated to a dazzling fireworks display in celebration of the holiday season. JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

Waitress dies after failing to get out of bar on fire

By Jocelyn R. Uy

AN 18-YEAR-OLD WAITRESS working in a Parañaque City videoke bar was the lone casualty in a fire that hit the establishment yesterday.

According to witnesses, Cecilia Fontabella lit a cigarette before she fell asleep at around 2:30 a.m. yesterday on the second floor of Romy's Videoke Bar on Dimasalang Street in Barangay Baclaran.

"But some witnesses also claimed that the fire started in the kitchen on the first floor of the videoke bar," city fire marshal Supt. Leonides Perez told the INQUIRER.

Fontabella had reportedly been drinking before she fell asleep after her shift was over. Annabelle Escano, a coworker, told firemen that the victim failed to wake up and get out of the burning videoke bar.

Arson investigators have yet to determine what triggered the fire which spread to a neighboring three-story six-door apartment and several other commercial establishments.

Perez said an optical shop and a hardware store were not spared by the blaze.

He pegged the damage at P3 million after it was put out shortly after 5 a.m. yesterday.

The fire official added that the bar owner could be held liable for the incident if they find out that the establishment had failed to comply with fire safety code provisions.

"Based on initial investigation, there are some violations but we have to review the establishment's documents," Perez said.

Psychic in Ballocillo case 'on right track'

By Alcuin Papa

THE PSYCHIC WHO VOLUNTEERED TO HELP the police in their investigation into the murder of Assistant Solicitor General Nestor Ballocillo and his son is "on the right track."

Chief Supt. Roberto Rosales, Southern Police District (SPD) chief, told reporters in Camp Crame yesterday that they are "testing the credibility" of the psychic, and so far, he has provided them "good information."

"There was information given by the psychic that matched some of the details in our investigation. We are checking if this has any relevance. We are confident that we can find the suspects because he (the psychic) is on the right track," Rosales said.

He stressed, however, that the police would "not veer away from the scientific investigation."

"It (the investigation) will still be based on evidence. Any information from the psychic is inadmissible in court. But we thought there's no harm in trying," Rosales explained.

So far, the psychic has told police that the three suspects in the case were hired killers. He also revealed the killers' motive although Rosales refused to divulge the information to media.

According to Rosales, psychics "should be used on a case-to-case basis" only.

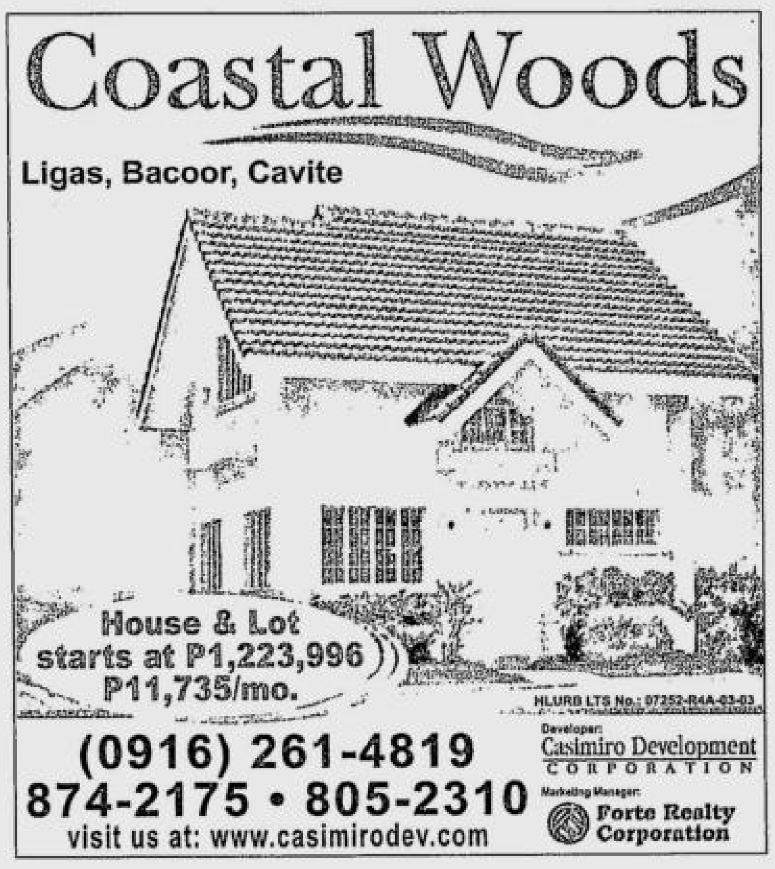
"Out of the blue, someone volunteered the services of the psychic. He (psychic) just asked for the birthdays of the victims," he added.

The police official said he accepted the psychic's offer of help after he saw on television how psychics and clairvoyants had helped the Federal Bureau of Investigation in its crime probes.

Ballocillo and his 23-year-old son, Benedict, were on their way to work in Makati City last Dec. 6 when armed men shot them at close range.

The Parañaque police and the National Bureau of Investigation said earlier the killing could be work-related.

The elder Ballocillo was handling several cases, including the expropriation of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport terminal 3.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NBI warns of plot to kill DOJ's Velasco

By Margaux C. Ortiz and Joba Botana

AN OFFICIAL OF THE NATIONAL BUREAU of Investigation (NBI) yesterday revealed a plot to kill Senior State Prosecutor Emmanuel Velasco of the Department of Justice (DOJ).

NBI Deputy Director for Regional Operations Services Reynaldo Esmeralda said Velasco sought the bureau's help on the threat to his life which he learned through a letter sent by an informant.

"Velasco was very concerned about this recent threat against his life," Esmeralda said in an interview with reporters.

The NBI official said that according to the informant, he found out about the plot two weeks ago when he and a friend passed by a restaurant on Visayas Avenue in Quezon City.

In his letter to the state prosecutor, the informant said that he overheard four "muscled" armed men talking about killing a "Fiscal Velasco" to avenge their lawyer-friend.

Feeling that there could only be one person whom the four men were talking about, he decided to warn the DOJ official.

When Velasco received the letter, he immediately alerted Esmeralda, who assigned the case to the NBI National Capital Region (NCR) Office.

The agents will investigate if the slay plot was connected to the rebellion cases Velasco has been handling for months now, Esmeralda said.

The NBI official added that he was positive that Velasco was the target of the plot since the prosecutor has been receiving death threats lately.

Velasco earlier requested for escorts when he noticed suspicious individuals around his house three months ago, according to Esmeralda.

"Of course, danger is really part of the hazards of the job but we should not take those threats lightly," the NBI official said..

"On the part of Velasco, he must be extra careful," he added.

DID YOU KNOW

THE UNIVERSITY of the Philippines' Oblation was modeled after Fernando Poe Sr., the late actor's father, who was an engineering and chemistry student at the university when sculptor Guillermo Tolentino made the statue in 1935. UP president Rafael Palma requested Tolentino to create a sculpture based on the second stanza of Dr. Jose P. Rizal's "Mi Ultimo Adios," where the national hero expressed willingness to give up his life for the country. UP students and staff raised P2,000 in two months, a hefty sum at the time, to finance the project. The statue's height, 3.5 meters, represents 350 years of Spanish colonization. The original statue can be found at the third floor of the UP Main Library.

Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research

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Casino fronting as Internet cafe raided by NBI

By Margaux C. Ortiz

NATIONAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (NBI) agents raided an online casino fronting as an Internet cafe the other night in a popular nightspot strip in Manila and seized 23 computer units containing sophisticated gambling programs.

The NBI agents conducted the raid on Fast Ball Internet Cafe, allegedly owned and operated by Koreans, upon the request of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor).

Pagcor officials had certified that the amusement center was not licensed or authorized to operate as a game facility, according to an NBI report.

Second case

The operation took place a week after agents of the NBI Anti-Fraud and Computer Crimes Division (AFCCD) headed by Regional Director Elfren Meneses Jr. raided an alleged gambling den disguised as an amusement center in Tomas Morato, Quezon City.

NBI investigation showed that the Quezon City establishment, which yielded 71 expensive slot machines, was also owned by a Korean.

The seized slot machines were estimated to be worth over P21 million. In addition, they were said to be "so advanced" that the Pagcor's own machines paled in comparison.

Before raiding the Internet cafe at the corner of Julio Nakpil and J. Bacobo Streets in Malate, NBI agents applied for a search warrant.

Special Investigator Roel Jovenir of the NBI AFCCD said the increasing number of Koreans operating online casinos and gambling dens "may have something to do with their refusal to pay business taxes in the country."

Fee per hour

Jovenir also noted that the Internet cafe discouraged non-Koreans from entering the establishment by imposing a P100 per hour fee for its services.

"Customers normally pay P15 per hour to surf the Internet so they end up avoiding Fast Ball," he added.

The NBI investigator likewise said that the online games at the Internet cafe could also be popular in Korea.

Apart from the 23 computer units, the NBI agents also seized 17 office chairs and 350 prepaid cards allegedly used to access the online games.

"The cafe's customers pay for the Internet cards with US dollars or Korean won, again discouraging local residents from patronizing the establishment," Jovenir said.

Identification

The NBI agents invited for questioning four Koreans believed to be involved in the establishment's operations.

"But we have yet to identify the actual owners and operators of Fast Ball," Jovenir said.

The suspects face charges for violating Republic Act 9887 or An Act Increasing the Penalties for Illegal Numbers Games.

Policeman in extortion case lands in jail

By Tina G. Santos

A MANILA POLICEMAN FOUND himself in jail after he was nabbed by his colleagues for allegedly mulcting money from an American the other day in Ermita.

Charged with robbery extortion, illegal arrest and acts of lasciviousness was P03 Eduardo Cayabyab, 34, assigned to the District Withholding Section of the Manila Police District.

Also arrested and charged were his civilian cohorts identified as Ronald Caparros, 25, of Sta. Ana, Manila and Larry de la Cruz, 22, of Tramo Street, Pasay City.

An investigation showed that members of the MPD Ermita Station were on patrol on Pedro Gil Street at around 10:45 p.m. last Monday when they noticed a taxi cab parked near Hyatt Hotel.

Behind the taxi was a Toyota Revo, which, policemen claimed, had been used in several criminal incidents in the past but had always managed to escape.

When the two vehicles left the area, the police operatives followed them. Sensing they were being tailed, the drivers of both vehicles picked up speed.

Authorities managed to catch up with them on Apacible Street in Ermita, Manila.

Cayabyab, who was driving the Toyota Revo, alighted from the vehicle and approached the policemen who saw two women inside the van.

The two—identified as Renalyn Buenaventura, of Catmon, Malabon City and Lalaine Obando, of Millennium Plaza, Makati City—claimed they were abducted by the suspects.

The women also told the policemen that their American friend, Evan Turner, was being held in the taxi by Cayabyab's cohorts.

Supt. Rogelio Rosales Jr., station commander of the Ermita Police Station, said the suspects initially took P400 belonging to the victims, but they demanded a bigger amount. They were later caught by operatives.

Cayabyab also allegedly touched the women's private parts as he supposedly searched them for drugs.

Rosales said that Cayabyab had been involved in similar offenses in the past, but had always managed to escape arrest.

"Cayabyab was relieved from his post at MPD Station 10 in Pandacan last month after he was allegedly involved in robbery-extortion activities," he added.

All they (Pasig vendors) want for Christmas

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

DISPLACED FROM THE SIDEWALK, vendors are asking the Pasig City Hall for just one gift this Christmas: That they be allowed to sell their wares in front of the Mutya ng Pasig Public Market.

"We are asking for some consideration so our families will also be happy this Christmas," Pasig United Muslim Federation president Bae Molinto Hadji Ali told the INQUIRER.

She said her group represented about 300 vendors selling wares on the sidewalks of the biggest public market in the metropolis.

The city government had been driving illegal vendors away to ease traffic on Market Avenue.

But clearing operations turned violent the other morning when unidentified persons hurled a pillbox at the operatives, hurting five persons, including an 8-year-old boy.

Police said clearing operations would be sustained. Seventeen policemen were also sent to the market to provide undercover security, officials said. But yesterday noon, vendors were still seen occupying the sidewalk in front of the public market.

Legitimate vendors paying for stalls inside the market had been complaining of lower sales because some buyers had been buying products from sidewalk vendors, police added. But a 45-year-old vegetable vendor told the INQUIRER she also felt bad for the sidewalk vendors.

"They just want to earn some money," said the vendor, who pays up to P10,000 in permit, electricity and water fees monthly.

Ali said they had written Pasig City Mayor Vicente Eusebio as early as three weeks ago asking him to allow them to occupy the sidewalks around the market at least until the first week of January.

The vendors also said Eusebio gave them three weeks last year to sell on the streets—but not after a clash between sidewalk clearing members and vendors protecting their wares.

Ali said they would try to meet with Eusebio to reiterate their appeal.

"We are willing to pay permit fees, just like last year. We are all residents of Pasig City anyway," she added.

The minor blast on Monday noon was the second time this month an alleged pillbox exploded in the public market.

Two weeks ago, three persons were hurt when an alleged pillbox exploded in front of the market minutes after witnesses heard two groups of vendors yelling at one another.

METROBRIEFS

P5 million lost in factory fire

FIVE million pesos worth of plastic materials were lost yesterday as a fire caused by an overheating electric blower broke out inside a factory in Valenzuela City. Chief Insp. Agapito Nacario, the city fire chief, said that sparks flying from the electric blower started the blaze after they landed on some flammable materials stored inside the Ultima Polly factory on San Guillermo St. in Karuhatan. Nacario said the fire, which started at 1:20 p.m., was placed under control almost an hour later with no deaths or injuries reported. He added that lost during the fire were printing materials and equipment used to shape plastic products. Ironically, the factory, Nacario said, was owned by a fire volunteer. Fortunately, the factory had a fire truck which was able to respond quickly. "Fast access to a fire truck helped prevent the blaze from spreading to other areas in the compound," Nacario added.

Nancy C. Carvajal

Binay raring to present proof

MAKATI Mayor Jejomar Binay is looking forward to presenting in court evidence against accusations that he and other city officials kept ghost employees in the City Hall payroll. Speaking for Binay, Makati information chief Joey Salgado said Binay would next present before the Court of Appeals his defense in the allegation made by his political rival, Roberto Brillante, a complaint that almost resulted in his suspension last October. In his complaint, Brillante alleged that Binay and his councilors were liable for "grave misconduct, abuse of authority and for conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service" for conspiring to defraud the Makati City government by putting about 1,000 ghost employees on the payroll. In a resolution which was released the other day, the appelate court issued on Dec. 11 a preliminary injunction stopping Malacañang from suspending Binay, Vice Mayor Ernesto Mercado and 16 city councilors until the court can hear the complaint's merits. "What it shows is a good indication that the court appreciates the arguments of the mayor. There will be hearings and we feel that we can now present to the court the basis for the mayor's arguments against the case," said Salgado.

Tarra V. Quismundo

UP Press takes a break

THE UNIVERSITY of the Philippines Press Book Store in Diliman, Quezon City will be closed from Dec. 21 to Jan. 1, 2007 in observance of the holidays. Join the last day of the Christmas sale today. All UP Press titles are selling at discounted prices of up to 70 percent. Watch out for the opening of the UP Press Book Store's newest branch in Cebu City early next year.

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Nokor nuke talks enter crucial phase

BEIJING—TWO SENIOR US DELEGATIONS held direct talks Tuesday with officials from North Korea as a diplomatic drive to persuade the Stalinist regime to give up its nuclear weapons entered a crucial phase.

Finance experts from the two nations met in Beijing to discuss a drawn-out dispute over US sanctions on the North that the cash-strapped nation has said must be resolved before it will consider surrendering its nuclear arms.

They met on the sidelines of key six-nation talks aimed at convincing North Korea to disarm, and which resumed only on Monday after a 13-month suspension caused by Pyongyang's objections to the sanctions.

The restart of the negotiations came after North Korea shocked the world on Oct. 9 with its first-ever atomic test.

As the financial teams huddled down here Tuesday, officials said the chief US and North Korean envoys to the six-nation forum met separately for their first formal face-to-face encounter since the talks restarted.

While no details were immediately available on what had been discussed in both meetings, US envoy Christopher Hill said earlier Tuesday that the day's events would be vital in determining if Pyongyang may be prepared to disarm.

North Korea had returned to the forum in a defiant mood on Monday with its chief envoy Kim Kye-Gwan outlining a long list of demands he said must be met before it would consider scrapping its nuclear arms.

Under the US sanctions, $24 million belonging to North Korean leader Kim Jong-il and other members of his ruling elite have been frozen in a Macau bank.

Aside from unfreezing those funds, Kim said that United Nations sanctions imposed on North Korea in October after its test must also be lifted.

Kim further demanded that North Korea be given help in building a nuclear reactor for power needs and that the US policy of "hostility" against it must be dropped.

Hill, as well as the Japanese and South Korean chief delegates, tried to downplay the North's opening demands, describing them as opening gambits with Tuesday's negotiations important to see if compromise could be made.

"I think I would be hard pressed to say any progress was made (on Monday)," Hill said.

"(But) today is a much more important day to see how things are going to go. We need to make progress on the basis of our September agreement. We need to get going on implementing that." The September agreement was a deal brokered in the six-party forum in which North Korea said it would give up its nuclear program in return for security guarantees, energy benefits and other aid.

North Korea pulled out of the six-nation talks—which include the United States, China, Russia, South Korea and Japan—two months after the September deal in protest at the US financial sanctions.

The United States had previously maintained that the sanctions must not be brought into the six-party forum, insisting they were a law enforcement issue unrelated to the North's nuclear program.

But following the nuclear test, Washington agreed to discuss the sanctions in the forum, a crucial compromise that led to Pyongyang agreeing to return to the talks.

However Hill insisted again on Tuesday that the international community would not accept North Korea as a nuclear power.

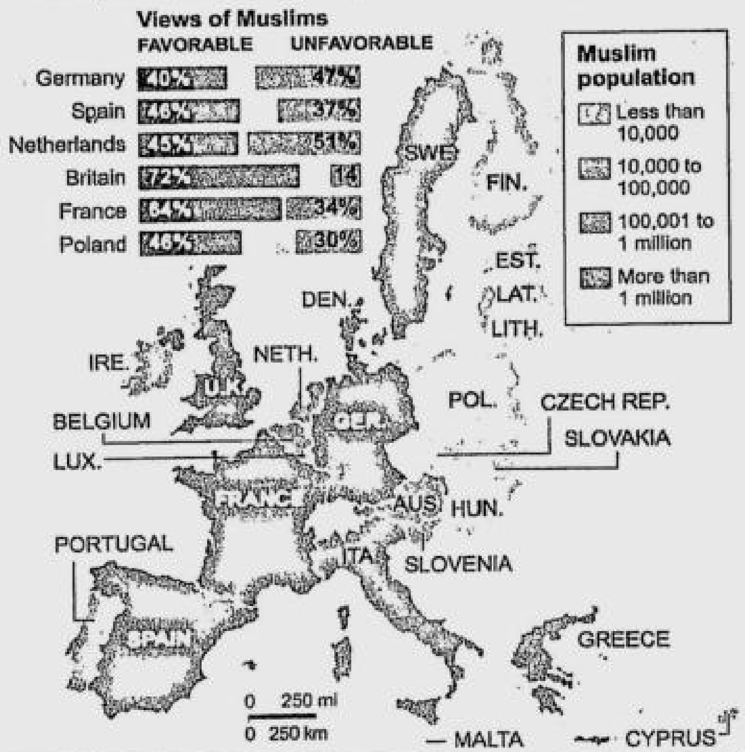
"We have made it very clear that we are not going to live with their nuclear weapons," he said.

Japanese envoy Kenichiro Sasae said Monday's demands from the North Koreans were unacceptable.

AFP

Religious tensions brewing in Europe

The European Union's estimated 13 million Muslims – at least 3.5 percent of the 25-nation bloc's population – are confronting a rise in "Islamophobia," indicated by a report released Monday.



SOURCES: European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia; Pew Global Attitudes Project; ESRI

AP

Nasa, Google bring space exploration to the Internet

SAN FRANCISCO—GOOGLE AND US space agency Nasa announced an alliance on Monday to solve cosmic computing problems and channel information from space around the world via the Internet.

The online search powerhouse signed a Space Agreement Act in a move that formalized a partnership started last year when Google said it would build a massive research center at Nasa Ames Research Center on the cusp of Silicon Valley in Northern California.

In what was heralded as the first in a series of joint collaborations, Google and scientists at Ames said they would put "the most useful of Nasa's information on the Internet." Among data being eyed for the Internet were three-dimensional maps of the moon, weather satellite imagery, and real-time tracking of the International Space Station.

"This agreement between Nasa and Google will soon allow every American to experience a virtual flight over the surface of the moon or through the canyons of Mars," Nasa administrator Michael Griffin said in a release.

"This innovative combination of information technology and space science will make Nasa's space exploration work accessible to everyone."

Nasa and Google teams met recently to discuss computer science problems facing both organizations and ways to jointly tackle those challenges, according to both organizations.

AFP

WORLDBRIEFS

Spy poisoining probe ends

MOSCOW—British detectives probing the murder of former Russian spy Alexander Litvinenko have wound up their investigation in Moscow and are due to leave for home on Tuesday, a British police source said on Monday. No details of what the Scotland Yard investigators had discovered were available. Earlier, Russian agency Interfax, quoting what is said was an informed source, reported that the investigators had interviewed six people including Dmitry Kovtun and Andrei Lugovoy, who met Litvinenko in London on Nov. 1, the day he fell ill with radiation poisoning. Litvinenko died on Nov. 23 from a lethal dose of polonium 210. On his deathbed, he accused Putin of being behind his death but the Kremlin has denied the allegation as nonsense.

Reuters

Cartoon legend Barbera dies

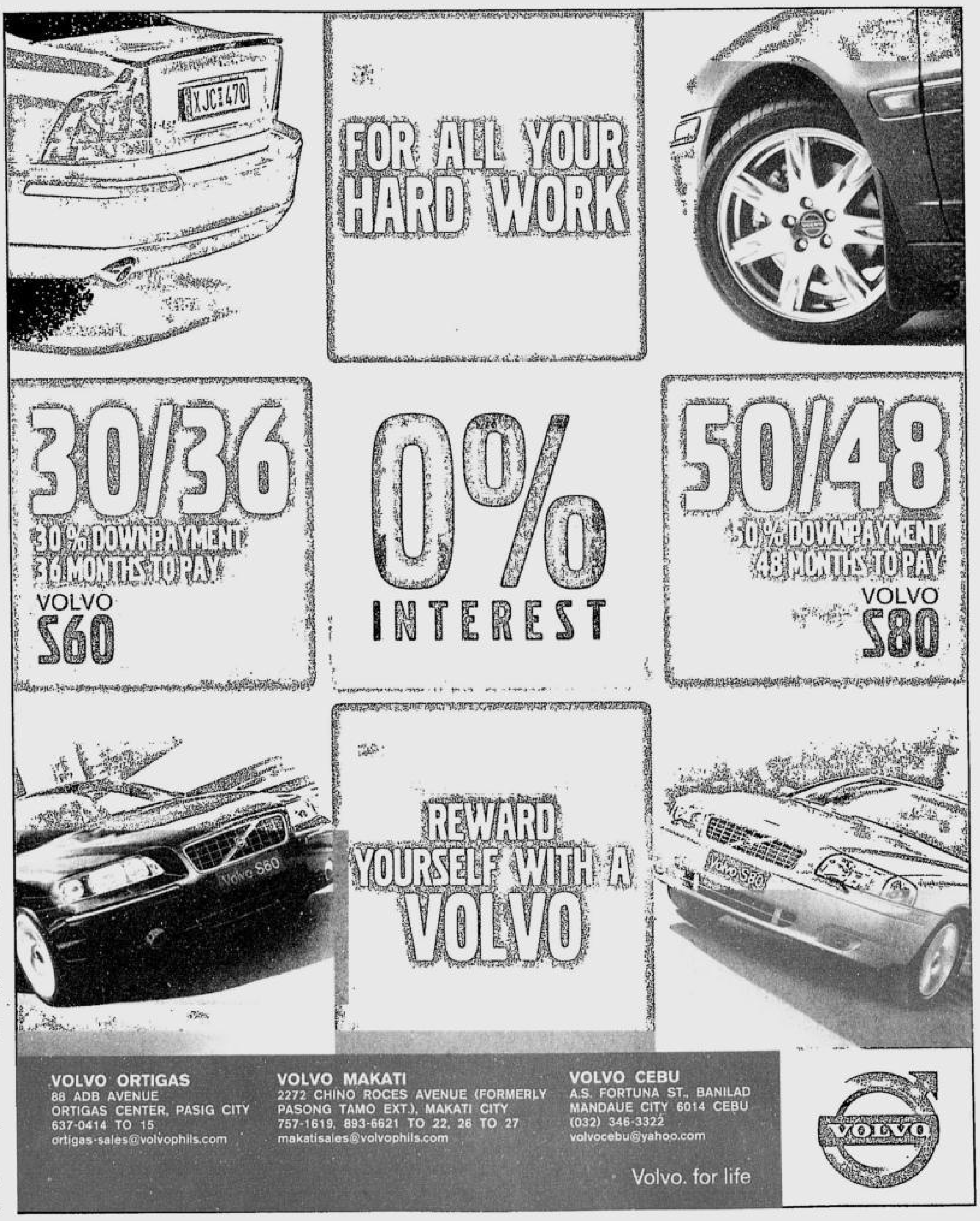
LOS ANGELES—Legendary Hollywood animator Joseph Barbera, whose characters Fred and Wilma Flintstone and Scooby-Doo made generations of people laugh, died on Monday at age 95, the Warner Bros. film studio said in a statement. Barbera founded Hanna-Barbera Studios with his partner William Hanna nearly 50 years ago, and it grew to become one of Hollywood's best known animation companies producing hundreds of cartoons and winning numerous awards. He died at his home in the Los Angeles-area community of Studio City with his wife Sheila by his side, Warner Bros. said. No further details were disclosed.

Reuters

US-India nuclear pact signed

WASHINGTON—US President George W. Bush on Monday signed a landmark civilian nuclear deal with India, a controversial pact he hailed as critical to better US ties with the world's largest democracy. "The United States and India are natural partners," Bush said at a White House signing ceremony, calling the agreement "evidence of the growing bonds of trust between our two countries." The US president and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh agreed to the deal during Bush's July 2005 visit to India, and the US Congress approved the arrangement on Dec. 9.

AFP



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Iraq attacks at record high—Pentagon

WASHINGTON—VIOLENT ATTACKS IN IRAQ have soared to the highest level on record, the Pentagon said in a quarterly report, describing Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army militia as the single largest threat to stability.

The report, titled "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," said there was an average of 959 attacks per week between Aug. 12 and Nov. 10, the highest recorded level of attacks since Congress ordered the Pentagon to issue the reports in 2005.

There was a 22 percent jump in attacks compared to the three preceding months, according to the report released Monday.

Sixty-eight percent of the attacks were aimed at soldiers with the US-led coalition, but most casualties were Iraqis, according to the report.

"The violence in Iraq poses a grave threat to political progress," the report said, adding that some of the increase "could be attributed to a seasonal spike in violence during (the holy month of) Ramadan." Attacks on infrastructure have dropped, but the cumulative effect of attacks have strained services for Iraqis, according to the report.

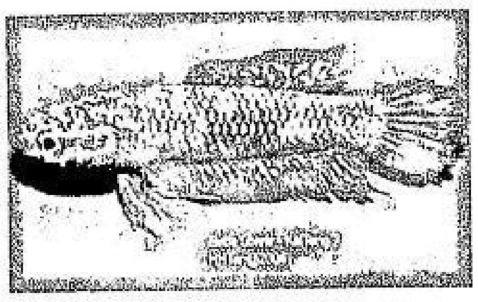
Fifty-four percent of all attacks took place in the provinces of Baghdad and Al-Anbar. Outside of that area, which encompasses most of what US officials call the Sunni Triangle, "more than 90 percent of Iraqis reported feeling very safe in their neighborhoods," it said.

The largest threat to security was Sadr's Mahdi Army militia, "which has replaced al-Qaida in Iraq as the most dangerous accelerant of potentially self-sustaining sectarian violence in Iraq," according to the report.

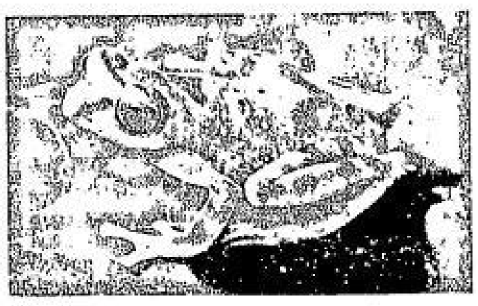
It also said that the National Reconciliation and Dialogue Project had "shown little progress," as sectarian violence "has steadily increased despite meetings among religious and tribal leaders." The report also said that total civilian casualties were up by two percent compared to the previously recorded period.

The report was released just hours after former CIA chief Robert Gates, 63, was sworn in as US defense secretary, replacing the embattled Donald Rumsfeld.

"Failure in Iraq at this juncture would be a calamity that would haunt our nation, impair our credibility and endanger Americans for decades to come," Gates said at the swearing-in ceremony. *AFP*



A NEW species of Siamese fighting fish named betta uberis. REUTERS



A NEW species of tree frog named rhacophorus gadingensis. REUTERS

Scientists find over 50 new species in Borneo

JAKARTA—DOZENS OF NEW SPECIES OF animals and plants including a catfish with protruding teeth and a tree frog with striking bright green eyes have been found in the past year in the forests of Borneo, a WWF report said on Tuesday.

The discoveries include 30 unique fish species, two tree frog species, 16 ginger species, three tree species and one large-leafed plant species, the conservation group said.

"These discoveries reaffirm Borneo's position as one of the most important centers of biodiversity in the world," said Stuart Chapman, WWF International Coordinator of the Heart of Borneo Program.

"The more we look the more we find," he added.

Scientists had found a miniature fish—the world's second smallest vertebrate, measuring less than 1 centimeter in length and living in the acidic blackwater peat swamps of the island, the report said.

Discoveries also included six Siamese fighting fish, including one with an iridescent blue-green marking, and a catfish with protruding teeth and an adhesive belly which allows it to stick to rocks.

In terms of plants, WWF said the ginger discoveries more than doubled the entire number of the Etlingera species, while three new tree species of the genus Beilschmiedia were found.

A number of the species were found in the "Heart of Borneo," a 220,000 sq km highland area covered with equatorial rainforest in the center of the island, it said. *Reuters*

Ex-spy chief sworn in as US defense chief

WASHINGTON—FORMER CIA DIRECTOR Robert Gates was sworn in as US defense secretary Monday, giving new leadership to a military strained by war and faced with critical decisions on a faltering mission in Iraq.

Gates, 63, who took the oath of office at the White House early Monday morning, replaces Donald Rumsfeld, the architect of the Iraq war who resigned under fire after nearly six years at the helm of the Pentagon.

US President George W. Bush was scheduled to lead a ceremonial swearing-in at the Pentagon later in the day.

In his confirmation hearings earlier this month, Gates said the United States was not winning in Iraq but withheld his own views of what course to take until he met with US military commanders.

"It's my impression that, frankly, there are no new ideas on Iraq," he said. "The list of tactics, the list of strategies, the list of approaches, is pretty much out there.

"And the question is: Is there a way to put pieces of those different proposals together in a way that provides a path forward?"

Gates is a former member of a blue ribbon panel that recommended the withdrawal of most US combat forces by early 2008 as security responsibilities are rapidly shifted to Iraqis assisted by US advisers. *AFP*

Deadly Gaza gun battle threatens fragile truce

GAZA CITY—DEADLY GUNBATTLES raged in Gaza City on Tuesday, threatening a fragile truce aimed at halting an increasingly violent power struggle between rival Palestinian factions.

A Hamas policeman was killed and 12 others injured in the latest bout of armed clashes in the impoverished Gaza Strip between supporters of the ruling Islamist movement and the rival Fatah party.

Ismail Abu al-Kheir, 25, was the sixth person killed in a wave of violence since Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas called Saturday for early elections, a move the Hamas-controlled government has denounced as tantamount to a coup.

Kheir was shot dead in a firefight at a hospital in Gaza, where staff said Hamas gunmen were firing from inside the building at security servicemen posted outside.

"A group of the intelligence service which was surrounding the hospital fired a number of anti-tank rockets towards the (Hamas) force, killing the martyr (Kheir)," Hamas's armed wing Ezzedine al-Qassam said in a statement.

Clashes also erupted between Hamas and Fatah loyalists near intelligence services headquarters in northern Gaza City, security sources and witnesses said.

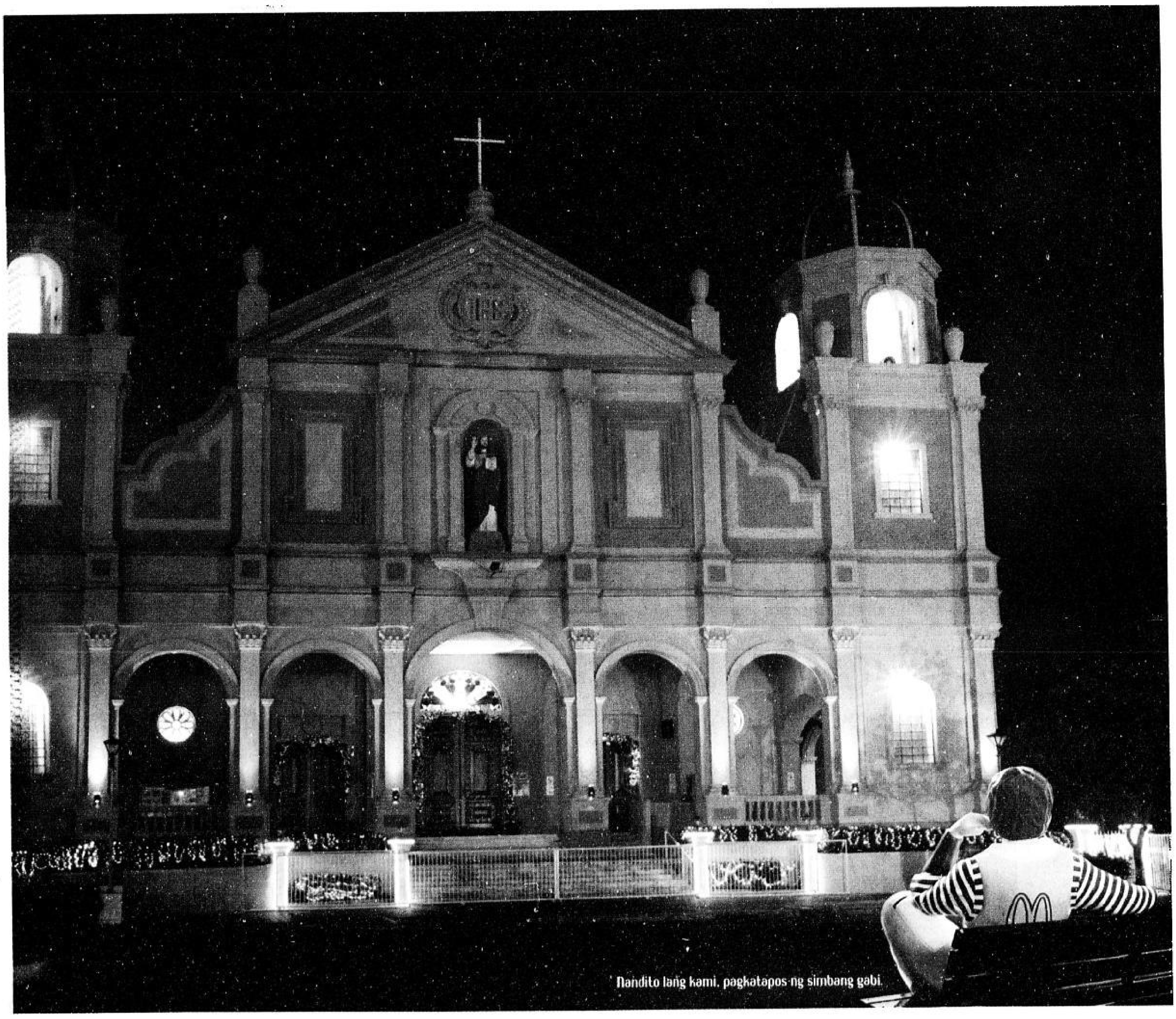
According to security sources, the Hamas force captured a member of the intelligence services.

Elsewhere in Gaza, armed Hamas militants in black hoods and Islamic green bandannas were seen roaming the streets while crowds of mourners gathered for the funeral of a member of the Fatah-dominated security services.

However, efforts to contain the violence and prevent a feared descent into civil war were gathering pace on Tuesday.

Hamas prime minister Ismail Haniya is to deliver an address in which aides said he would appeal for calm, while the head of the Organization of the Islamic Conference Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu is set to meet both Abbas and Haniya.

"(Haniya) will not encourage escalation but on the contrary will urge a return to calm and for an end to the crisis," his political advisor Ahmad Yussef said. *AFP*



WHAT'S INSIDE

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TIME DEPOT
Give Time this Christmas

Olympic gold over SEAG victory

By June Navarro and Marc Anthony Reyes

THE QUEST FOR THE COUNTRY'S first Olympic gold will take precedence over the defense of the Southeast Asian Games overall championship.

Given orders by no less than President Macapagal Arroyo yesterday, Philippine Sports Commission chair William "Butch" Ramirez started charting the course of local sports toward the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Not that the PSC, as the government agency tasked with funding athletes' training, would degrade the RP campaign in next year's Southeast Asian Games in Thailand, but Ramirez believes that snaring the first Olympic gold should be given more weight.

"We will go to the SEA Games to defend our title," said Ramirez, after the President gave him a "vote of confidence" to stay on as the government's sports czar at Malacañang yesterday.

"The search for that elusive Olympic gold, however, will be the main objective."

Ramirez went to the Palace with the 18 athletes who won four gold, six silver and nine bronze medals in the recent Asian Games in Doha, Qatar.

The medal haul was the country's biggest since the Jakarta Asiad in 1962, when the late Diosdado Macapagal, Mrs. Arroyo's father, was the country's Chief Executive.

The athletes received checks for P13.5 million, the sum of their bonus incentives for winning medals.

PRESIDENT Arroyo congratulates Asian Games billiards 9-ball gold medalist Antonio Gabica as silver medalist Jeff De Luna looks on during the ceremony at Malacañang. EDWIN BACASMAS

Ramirez said the PSC and the Philippine Olympic Committee will identify the sports where the athletes have the biggest probabilities of landing Olympic medals.

He also said he would join First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo and POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco on a trip to China early next month "to establish rapport" with the country's sports officials.

China, according to Ramirez, will become the "home base" of athletes in diving and fencing.

Ramirez said the PSC and the POC will fund the training of athletes in taekwondo and archery in South Korea, karatekas in Italy and equestrian riders in Europe. Boxing will hire a new Cuban coach.

Boxing's Violito Payla and Joan Tipon captured a gold each, while the taekwondo jins struck for two silver and three bronze medals.

Ramirez: I have fresh mandate

By Marc Anthony Reyes

AFTER ANNOUNCING HE WOULD STEP DOWN AS chair of the Philippine Sports Commission at the end of the Doha Asian Games, William "Butch" Ramirez made a U-turn yesterday.

Ramirez had reason to: President Macapagal Arroyo wants the PSC to spearhead the drive to win the country's first Olympic gold in the 2008 Beijing Games.

"In a sense, I was given a fresh mandate," he said, after accompanying the country's Asian Games medalists to Malacañang yesterday.

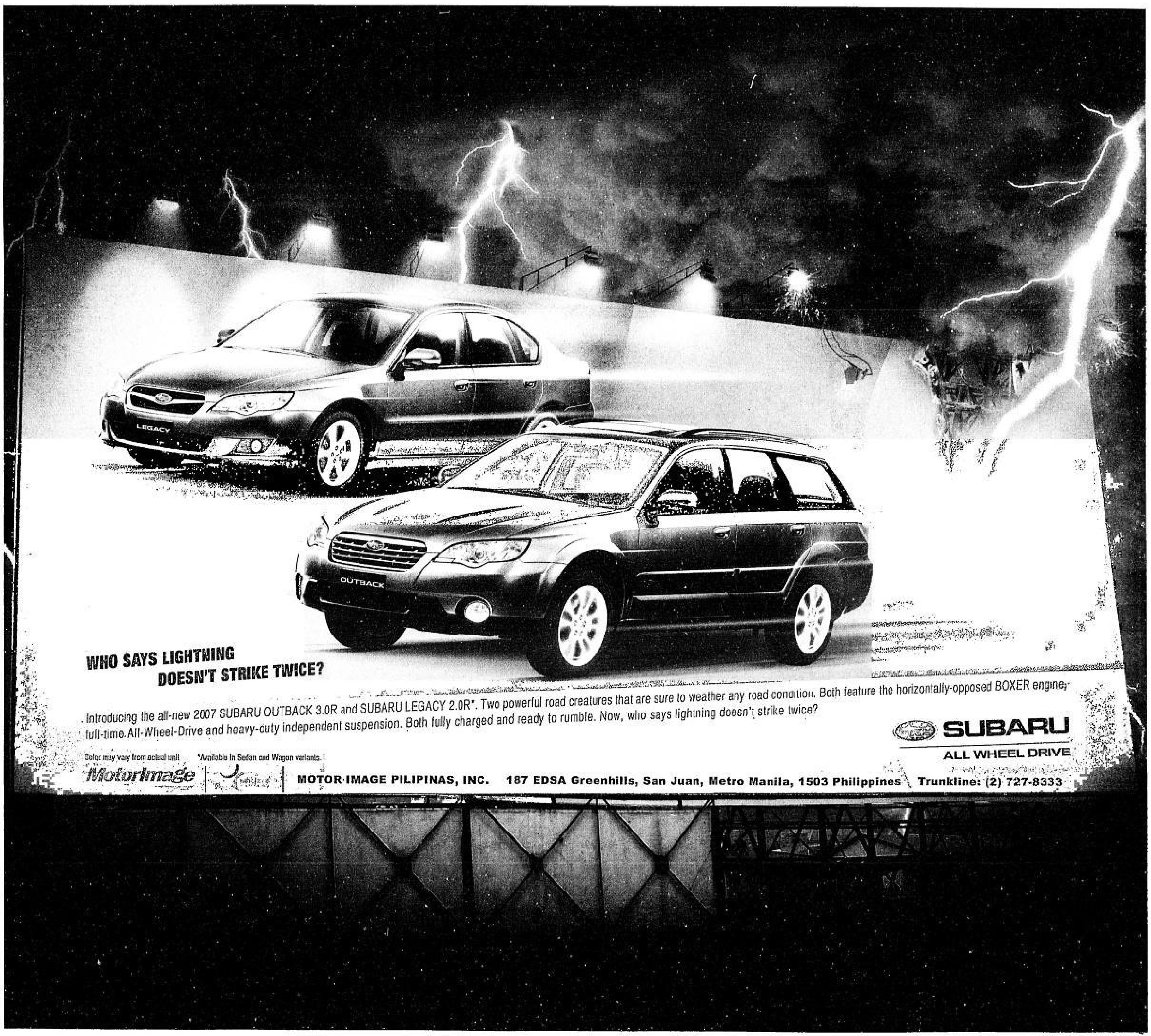
Ramirez said he considered Mrs. Arroyo's order to prepare the athletes for Beijing as a vote of confidence.

"*Tuloy tuloy tayo sa Olympics* (We'll push ahead with the Olympic quest for gold)," the President told Ramirez in front of the athletes, led by Asiad gold medalists Violito Payla and Joan Tipon.

When Ramirez replied, "Yes ma'm, I will continue to serve you," the President told him, "Yes."

Ramirez went on to discuss with the President a "short-range" plan to win the elusive Olympic gold.

"I took it to mean that the President is committed and focused on winning the Olympic gold," he said. "My duty to help achieve that starts again today."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Paragua, Dimakiling, 7 others lead Pichay chess

Standings after two rounds:

2.0 points—M. Paragua, O. Dimakiling, D. Laylo, N. Mariano, W. So, P. Roca, M. Maga, J. Gomez, A. Unding, R. Salcedo; **1.5**—R. Bitoon, R. Dableo, Y. Ranola, O. Barbosa, R. Nolte, R. Legapsi, B. Nadera, R. Bancod, F. Donguines, J. de Ramos, R. Suelo, S. Cua, C. Perena, A. Branzuela, L. Ricana, L. Cuizon, E. Bagamasbad, R. Alcodia, R. Llavanes.

GRANDMASTER MARK PARAgua and GM-candidate Oliver Dimakiling hurdled their respective rivals to share the lead with seven others after the second round of 2nd Rep. Prospero "Butch" Pichay Jr. Cup National Open and Chess Challenge yesterday at SM City in Manila.

Paragua, the tournament's top seed with an Elo rating of 2587, defeated Fide Master Adrian Ros Pacis, while the second-ranked Dimakiling, 27, took the measure of Rodolfo Panopio of Calamba City.

Paragua and Dimakiling shared the lead with third seed International Master Darwin Laylo, No. 6 GM Nelson Mariano II, No. 11 IM Wesley So, No. 13 IM Petronio Roca, No. 16 FM John Paul Gomez, No. 19 FM Mirabeau Maga and No. 23 National Master Hecky Unding.

"*Magulo 'yung* game *namin* (Our game was tough to call)," said the 22-year-old Paragua, who beat Dino Ballecer in the opening round on Monday. "*Medyo* complicated *pero napilit ko lamang sa bandang huli* (It was complicated but I managed to squeeze the win in the endgame)."

Dimakiling said he benefited from coaching Laylo, IM Ronald Dableo and Jedara Docena, in the recent Doha Asian Games.

"*Yung preparasyon ko sa kanila, nagamit ko kay* Garcia *sa* (I used the preparations I devised for them in the) first round," said Dimakiling, who debuted with an easy win over Benjamin Garcia III.

Seventh seed IM Jayson Gonzales bounced back from a stunning first-round defeat to NM Arlan Cabe with a win over Woman NM Daisy Rivera.

The winner of the six-day event hosted and sponsored by Pichay, president of the National Chess Federation of the Philippines, will receive P100,000. *Marlon Bernardino, contributor*

MARK PARAGUA

SPORTSWATCH

Santos regains crown

AFTER AN ABSENCE OF ONE YEAR, 2003 AND 2004 titlist Alcomtiser Santos regained his throne in this year's 23rd Runner Challenge last Sunday at the University of the Philippines in Quezon City. The 39-year-old Santos, a national Milo Marathon veteran from Cabanatuan City, led from start to finish in clocking 40 minutes and 22 seconds and snatching the title from engineer Wilfredo Enriquez of the Quezon City Fire Department. Enriquez placed second in 41:22, followed by Jonathan Young (41:58). Completing the Top 10 overall are Graciano Santos (42:28), Roberto Manzano (43:40), Resty Picasion (44:04), Tommy Tan (45:21), Ryan Decosta (45:38) Ernesto Ledesma (45:42) and Benjamin Teodoro (45:38). In the distaff side, Ireland's Anna Whitehouse, managing director of Total-Philippines, won with a time 46:24. She was followed by Elizabeth Siojo (49:32) and Imelda Tan (59:10). Included in the top nine women finishers were Valerie Sanvictores (1:00:32), Christmas Sevilla (1:04:39), Analiza Soriano (1:05:56), Myra delos Angeles (1:11:58), Kristine Bacosa (1:13:25) and Marie Casero (1:14:29). Runnex president Alberto Verzola, Dr. Lito Duran and engineer Fidel Ringor also feated Mharlo Pua, a librarian from College of St. Benilde, and Maximin Corp., treasurers Romina Macasaet, who emerged champions in the men's and women's five-kilometer side-event.

Yonex-Sunrise Tour

THE YONEX-SUNRISE TOUR MOVES TO THE south as the Portside Badminton Center in Cebu City host the second stage of the 18-leg circuit on Jan. 26-28. Organizing committee chair and national coach Errol Chan said registration is now in full swing as leveling of participants in five levels for boys and girls doubles, singles and mixed doubles as well as in open category is set on Jan. 6-7 and 11-12. Other provinces committed to host the Tour were General Santos City (Feb. 23-25), Iloilo City, Bacolod City, Davao City, Butuan and Manila. Interested parties may log on into the tournament website and download the entry forms and email them to tournament_registration@yonexregionalphil.com or submit them to Portside Badminton Center.

Bata co-leads Rambulan

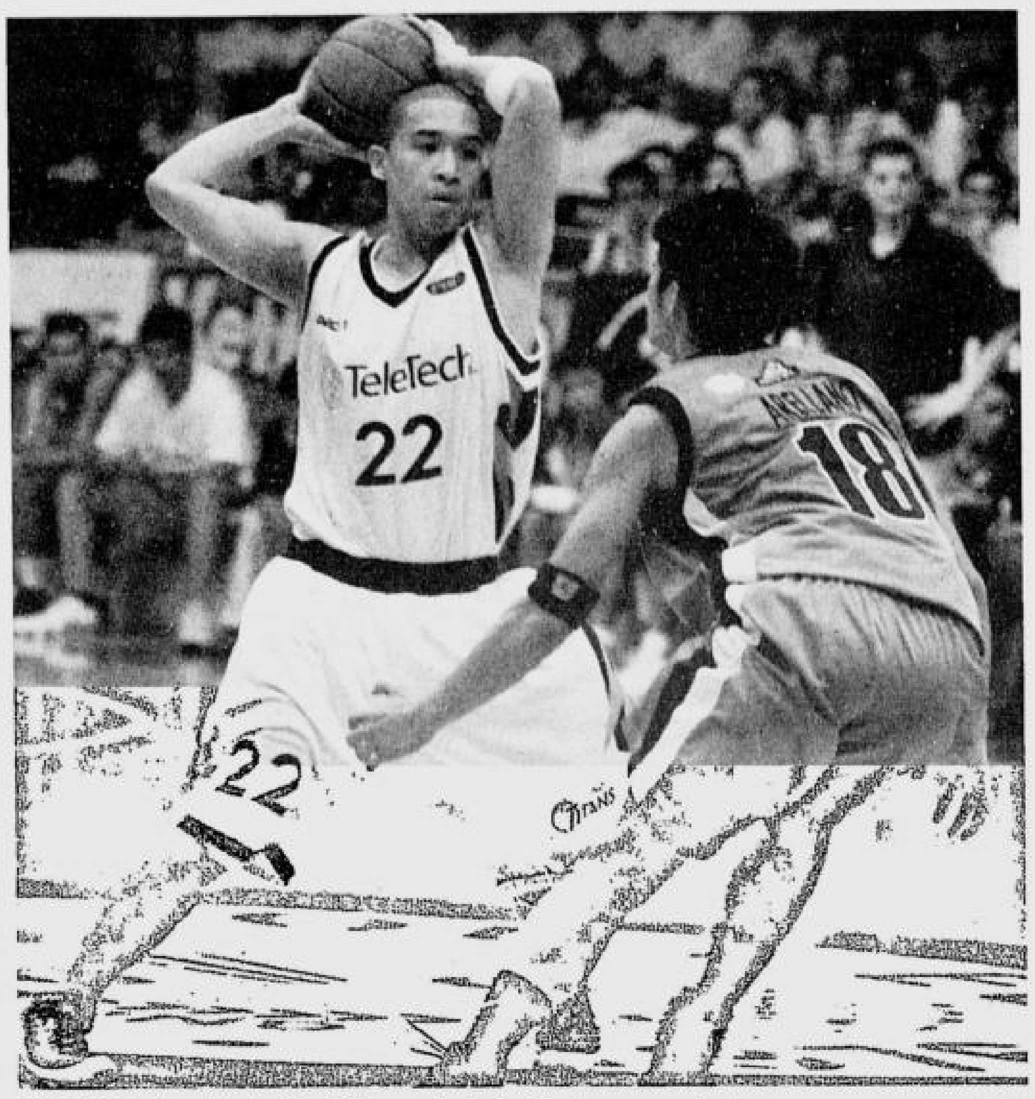
WITH MORE THAN 80 BIG TIME FIGHTS ON TAP, the championship round of Christmas Rambulan 6-cock derby starts at 1 p.m. today at the San Juan Coliseum. From 115 participants, 12 lead the race with three wins each, among them Sam Mendoza, Gov. Ito Ynares, Patrick Antonio, Efren "Bata" Reyes, Mario Garcia, Ramon Legarda, Arman Santos, Dean Joson and Bobby Nicolas. Appliances and surprise Christmas gifts will be raffled off to paying patrons, said host and SJC owner R. Pineda. Likewise, aficionados can watch five bands and partake of the free buffet after the derby. "This is the first time that a cockpit management will treat its loyal followers to a Christmas party," Pineda said. Call 725-5369 and 725-6563.

Fastest Win at PCC

PASAY CITY COCKPIT'S PAMASKONG HANDOG Fastest Win One-Cock Ulutan gets underway at 7 a.m. today with over 200 smalltime cockers and hackfight enthusiasts gunning for the guaranteed prize of P300,000. Pit manager Butchoy Olano said that the fastest win champion will receive P60,000 and a TV; second, P30,000 and personal ref; third, P20,000 and microwave oven; fourth, P10,000 and electric pot; fifth, P5,000 and electric pot. Likewise, all winners will receive special prizes like washing machine, electric fan, one sack of rice and TV. Free breakfast will be served starting at 7, according to Olano. The last 25 winners will also receive special prizes. Call 843-1890; 843-1746 and 816-6750.

GCAP series Dec. 27

THE COCKFIGHT SERIES OF GENTLEMEN COCKERS Association of the Philippines (GCAP) starts at San Juan Coliseum on Dec. 27 via the big-time 5-cock derby. Ten derbies will be presented by GCAP for the 2006-2007 cock season. Other schedules: Jan. 10 and 31; Feb. 21; March 7 and 28; April 11, May 2, 16 and 30. According to GCAP founder Patrick Antonio, guest participants may also join GCAP derbies for a discounted entry fee of P15,000. Regular members' entry fee is P22,000. GCAP members include Gerry Ramos, Rudy Albano, Patrick Antonio, Eric dela Rosa, Jet and Joel Fernando, Jingco Brothers, Madlambayan Brothers, Rey Briones, Rep. Butch Pichay, Bubot Booc, Ricky Valencia, Tony Marfori, Mayor Buddy Dunca, Butch Nuñez, Mayor Dennis Pineda, Louie Cua, Otto Balboa, Max and Bebot Roxas, Jack Yap, Vice Gov. Boyet Joson, Pol Estrellado, Totoy Haruta and Romy Castro.


MARCY Arellano blocks Kim Valenzuela during their game yesterday. NIÑO JESUS ORBETA

PBL showcases stalwarts' flair

THE PHILIPPINE BASKETBALL LEAGUE DISplays the athleticism, grace and flair of the country's future basketball stars today at the Olivarez Sports Center in Parañaque City.

A slam dunk contest pitting Harbour Centre's JC Intal and Edwin Asoro against the league's new talents like Magnolia's Samuel Ekwe will highlight the event billed as the Silver Cup Showcase.

A three-point shootout and an obstacle challenge are also scheduled in the showcase, the PBL's Christmas present to loyal fans, which will be held right after the 2 p.m. tussle between Harbour Centre and Cebuna Lhuillier-Pera Padala.

Known for their aerial acrobatics, the 6-foot-4 Intal and 6-3 Asoro are considered favorites in the slam dunk event which will also feature the likes of Toyota Otis' Rey Guevarra, Henkel-Sista's Stan Aldover, Magnolia's Ogie Menor and Hapee-PCU's Leimar Navarro and Ian Garrido.

Sista trips TeleTech; Sparks win

By Jasmine W. Payo

TURNING TO KELVIN GREGORIO AND MARCY ARELLANO IS FAST becoming a habit for Henkel Sista.

The Super Sealers banked on the firepower of Gregorio and Arellano in the final period to claim the solo lead with a 77-69 victory over the TeleTech Titans in the PBL Silver Cup yesterday at the Olivarez College Sports Center.

Gregorio fueled the Sealers' fourth-quarter run to finish with a game-high 19 points.

Arellano also drilled in 15 points, including six straight in the last two minutes that padded the gap to 75-66, sealing the Sealers sixth win in eight starts.

In claiming the top spot at 6-2, coach Caloy Garcia also gave credit to his backup players.

"If you look at the team, they're mostly a bunch of role players," said Garcia. "They stepped up, maybe not in scoring but defensively."

The Sealers' victory ended the three-game winning run of the Titans, who fell to a 4-3 slate.

Toyota Otis also leaned on their top two gunners to forge a 90-81 triumph over Magnolia Ice Cream in the second game.

Marvin Cruz and Patrick Cabahug combined for 17 out of the Sparks' 23-point production in the final canto to lead the the Sparks to their fourth win in seven games.

Magnolia missed the services of 6-foot-8 Nigerian Sam Ekwe, who sat at the bench as a disciplinary measure. The Spinners dropped to a 2-6 card.

The scores:

First Game

HENKEL SISTA 77 —Gregorio 19, Arellano 15, Malabanan 14, Robles 7, Bauzon 6, Ebuen 4, Eman 4, Alfad 4, Saldua 4, Bonus 2, Chua 0, Layug 0, Urra 0, Misa 0, Pinera 0.

TELETECH 69—Magpayo 15, Valenzuela 14, Villamin 13, Labagala 10, Grijaldo 8, Guerrero 5, Capus 4, Estrada 0, Tan 0, Latoreno 0, Mercado 0, Concha 0.

Quarters: 14-17, 25-28, 48-49, 77-69

Second Game

TOYOTA OTIS 90—Cruz 20, Daa 19, Rodriguez 13, Cabahug 12,Dedicatoria 8, Aldave 5, Fajardo 4, Jaime 3, Alcaraz 3, Jazul 2, Quinday 1, Guevarra 0, Baluyot 0, Yabut 0.

MAGNOLIA 81—Aljamal 13, Chan 12, Villanueva 11, Custodio 9, Escobal 8, Gamalinda 6, Raneses 6, Taganas 5, Barcellano 5, Menor 3, Angeles 2, Natividad 1.

Quarters: 28-27, 47-48, 67-66, 90-81

Unlike GMA, Pacman could spur change

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

THIS IS NOT LAS VEGAS AND YOUR credit card is not at stake. But let's try to place a bet on Manny Pacquiao.

No, not against Erik Morales, Marco Antonio Barrera or that *beinte-por-beinte* boxing "boy wonder" Edwin Valero.

It should be Manny Pacquiao, 28, against himself.

Or, to put it more urgently: Pacquiao vs the Philippines.

Can Pacquiao be an effective agent for the sought-after character change?

* * *

Let's make a little gamble.

Try to determine Pacquiao's immense impact and influence on the entire Filipino *masa*.

Wanna bet? Majority of Pinoys would stop, look and listen if Pacquiao, one of these days, used the pulpit and told poor, lost countrymen they should start behaving properly like law-abiding citizens.

Look, the Church has made the initial call for national character reformation.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo wisely moved away from the line of fire by wholeheartedly agreeing with what the Church had to prescribe for the Filipino soul.

* * *

Of course, the twin moves were flashed on the front pages, played up in practically all media outlets, including the tested marketplace gossip mills.

Sorry, but yesterday, the situation—the screaming scramble out in our chaotic streets—was worse than last week's.

People, at least the mad-mad majority, have obviously lost the sense of what's right and what's wrong.

It was, blindly and selfishly, to-each-his-own.

* * *

The truth is that, Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales, Archbishop of Manila, had to be rushed back to the hospital after straining himself in stressing the urgent need for national reformation out there at the Luneta on Sunday.

Anyway, our dear Cardinal need not be told that his call has again fallen on plugged ears.

Mrs. Arroyo, meanwhile, went her sweet, old way and feted Filipino medalists in the Doha Asian Games, sending across the message everything was fine in her protesting, badly battered republic.

* * *

Now, this is not to say that the boxer Manny Pacquiao has become more important than the Church.

No. But, at this perilous point, the national boxing hero could, indeed, provide the great difference.

Pacquiao, pardon this, could be a lot more relevant and useful than Malacañang and all the useless ordinances put together in reforming wild Filipino ways and restoring order in our streets, in the national life as a whole.

Wow! Your reporter would surely be hit for having allowed himself to be carried away.

Please, hold it. We've actually made random surveys, out there in the streets, among the lost and the embattled daily wage-earners.

The reply: Why not? Pacquiao could yet help open eyes to order, selflessness and better, healthy habits.

* * *

Themselves speaking, the more concerned citizens suggested that Pacquiao could be made to do endorsements.

You know, just like what he has succeeded in doing for myriad of products—from fried chicken to *patis*, everything—Pacquiao should be able to sell proper ways of behavior to the citizenry.

This could, repeat, sound wild and stupid to certain sectors.

But with practically everything falling into pieces out there in countless lawless streets and side alleys, there should be no harm trying.

"That's a step in the right direction. We can't go wrong with Manny Pacquiao. Count me in, please," said law-yer-sportsman Rudy Salud, founding sec-gen of the World Boxing Council.

* * *

Who knows? The first step to national reformation could be just around the corner, right under your nose.

It could be as simple as taking a couple of steps to use the garbage can—again.

Of course, the call is for our leaders, mainly pro-administration lawmakers that had again proven to be a collective disaster, to honestly do their assigned duties, with no fear or favor.

Pacquiao had said it. He was happy enough in having made Filipinos happy and united even for just a day ("*Masaya na ko, mapaligaya ko sila kahit sandali man lamang*").

Didn't Pacman show the world the Filipino was worth dying for when he agreed to fight Erik Morales on a night he was gravely ill last month?

If he could make them buy acid-based vinegar, as though this were real and authentic, there's no way Pacquiao could not work the spell and guide lost citizens back to right, heroics ways.

WBO FIGHT: Dominican champion Juan Guzman (right) connects with a right against his US challenger Antonio Davis during the 11th round of their scheduled 12-round WBO lightweight match in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, Monday. Guzman won by a decision. AP

Parker clinches ₱1-M poker prize

A BAD CALL BEFORE THE TURN TURNED OUT to be the clincher for Chris Parker of Australia in the exciting finale of the Philippine Poker Tour Million Peso Hold'em Philippine Championship at the Casino Filipino in Parañaque.

With an 8 and 6 against the King and Jack of opponent Ed Bautista, Parker called the big blind of Bautista and raised the pot to P200,000 after the flop.

The flop was King, 4 and 8, giving Bautista an even better hand with the highest pair on board. Bautista re-raised to P400,000 and Parker called.

Then came another 8 at the turn.

Parker, ahead by P800,000 at that point, went all-in and Bautista, thinking his opponent was bluffing, accepted the challenge.

The river produced garbage, giving Parker the title, the P1-million top prize and the champion's bracelet.

Bautista, younger cousin of the event's inaugural winner, Derek Bautista, was the chip leader after the first cut-off with more than half-million, or nearly 12-percent of the chips.

A sub-par performance in the Last 30 dropped him to fifth heading into the final table.

"*Sayang, hindi ko naibalik sa Baguio ang* champion's bracelet," the diminutive 24-year-old said.

He settled for the P350,000 runner-up prize.

His uncle Chris Bautista, incidentally, also made it to the final table.

Romy Pueblo and two-time finalist Manuel "Tikboy" Regis of Cebu finished third and fourth, respectively, and received P200,000 and P125,000.

RACING TIPS

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Tri)—Lakambini (5), Premiere Act (1), Ambot Sa Imo (3)
Race 2—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Zappy/Special Delivery (4), Honestly/Rafidash (8), Smile N Joy (3), Tucker Pride (6), Strong Dancer (7)
Race 3—(Tri)—Red Phoenix/Calvin's Magic (1), Latin Music (2), Besame Mucho (3)
Race 4—(Qrt/Tri)—Farragut's Order (5), Jay Nicole (2), Clear Stone (3), Lord Elgene (4)
Race 5—(Qrt/Tri)—Selectee (4), Strong Jays (5), Men of Honor (6), Caden Dance (3)
Race 6—(Qrt/Tri)—Cast Away (6), Record Holder (1), Long Road (2), Ravensworth (5)
Race 7—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Kambro (9), Time Enchanted (7), Risk Taker (4), Western Dancer (8), War General/Guided Missile (1)
Race 8—(Qrt/Tri)—Cash Mo Call/Firehouse (3), Gentleman's Lady (6), Special Lad (1), Ocean Dignity (4)
Race 9—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Field Star/Gun Power (6), Speed Admiral (5), Real Tough (4), Tiger Rally (1), Elusive Quality (3), Lucky Punch (9)

Indian runner fails Asiad gender test

NEW DELHI, INDIA—AN INDIAN RUNNER who won a silver medal in the women's 800 meters at the Asian Games failed a gender test and was stripped of the medal.

Shanti Sounderajan, 25, took the gender test in Doha, Qatar, after placing second.

The Indian Olympic Association said Monday it has been told by the Olympic Council of Asia that the 25-year-old runner was disqualified for failing a test.

"IOA has asked the Athletic-Federation of India to return the medal as desired by the Olympic Council of Asia," the Indian Olympic group said.

The IOA also asked its medical commission to inquire into Sounderajan's case and report within 10 days.

There are no compulsory gender tests during events sanctioned by the International Association of Athletics Federations, but athletes may be asked to take a gender test.

The medical evaluation panel usually includes a gynecologist, endocrinologist, psychologist and internal medicine specialist.

An Indian athletics official who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media said Sounderajan almost certainly never had sex-change surgery.

Instead, the official said Sounderajan appeared to have "abnormal chromosomes." The official also said the test revealed more Y chromosomes than allowed.

Sounderajan was not immediately available for comment. *AP*

SOUNDERAJAN. REUTERS

Thomas a 'despicable jerk,' says angry Karl

NEW YORK—DENVER GOT THE WORSE OF the suspensions handed out Monday by the NBA, but Nuggets coach George Karl left no doubt who he thought responsible.

Namely, Knicks coach Isiah Thomas, who escaped without punishment.

Karl unleashed a verbal assault on Thomas, worsening an already bad relationship.

"In my mind it was premeditated, it was directed by Isiah," Karl said Monday at the Pepsi Center in Denver speaking about the fight between the Nuggets and Knicks on Saturday night that was sparked by a hard foul committed against Nuggets guard JR Smith with 1:15 left.

Karl believed Thomas ordered the foul because of frustration that Denver's starters were still in the game with the Nuggets up big.

Karl called Thomas's actions "despicable" and called Thomas several expletives. He added, "He made a bad situation worse. He's a jerk, for what he's trying to do. I mean, I have a basketball team that's learning to win, and learning to win on the road, and my team has blown 10-point leads, 11-point leads with two minutes to go, and I watched Utah blow a 12-point lead to Sacramento two nights before with four minutes to go in the game, and you're telling me that I'm running the score up? He should be held accountable for what his actions are."

THOMAS AP

After the Knicks held their morning shootaround, Thomas took his shots at Karl, however.

"I can't speak for him, but he put his players in a tough position," Thomas said. "I think he put his players in a very bad position."

He was not suspended or fined by Stern, though Thomas appeared to be caught on video during the game warning Nuggets star Carmelo Anthony not to go to the basket or he would be fouled hard.

Thomas and Karl have had an ongoing feud stemming from Thomas' treatment of Larry Brown, Karl's close friend.

Earlier this season, the Knicks beat the Nuggets 109-107 after Denver had a five-point lead with 1:32 to play.

At the Knicks' shootaround, Thomas said he did not threaten Anthony.

"I didn't warn him," Thomas said. "At that point in time in the game, he and Marcus (Camby) were in the game. I said to those guys, 'This isn't the way you should act. This isn't the way you should be. You shouldn't be rubbing it in.' But it wasn't a threat, it was more or less, 'This isn't how you do it.'"

Knicks players backed him up. Center Kelvin Cato said the Nuggets went against the league's "unwritten rules." *NYT News Service*

NBA chief gets stern

Slaps 47-game suspension, $1-M fine for one-minute New York brawl

STEPHON Marbury of the New York Knicks drives hard against the Utah Jazz. AFP

NEW YORK—NBA SCORING LEADER Carmelo Anthony was suspended for 15 games and six other players were penalized on Monday, two days after the brawl between the Denver Nuggets and New York Knicks.

Nate Robinson and JR Smith each were suspended for 10 games, and four other players also were banned.

League commissioner David Stern fined each organization $500,000. But there was no separate penalty for Knicks coach Isiah Thomas, who had warned Anthony not to dribble into the foul lane before the melee started at Madison Square Garden.

"The NBA and its players represent a game of extraordinary skill, athleticism and grace, and, for good or bad, set an example for the entire basketball world, on and off the court," Stern said in a statement.

Anthony's suspension was the sixth longest in NBA history. Mardy Collins, whose hard foul on Smith sparked the fighting, was suspended for six games and Knicks teammate Jared Jeffries will miss four. Also, the Knicks' Jerome James and Denver's Nene both were penalized for one game for leaving the bench area during the chaos.

Ten players were ejected after the fight, which started with 1:15 left in Denver's 123-100 victory. It was the NBA's scariest scene since the brawl between Indiana Pacers players and Pistons fans in Detroit two years ago.

Stern said the fines to the organizations were meant to show he was serious about cleaning up the game.

"It's a more general message that I'm going to start holding our teams accountable," Stern said.

Collins prevented Smith from an easy basket by grabbing him by the neck and pushing him to the floor. Smith rose and immediately challenged Collins, and Robinson jumped in to pull Smith away. Anthony shoved Robinson away, and Robinson and Smith then tumbled into the front row while fighting.

Just as things appeared to be calming, Anthony threw a hard punch that floored Collins, and New York's Jared Jeffries sprinted from the baseline toward halfcourt in an effort to get at Anthony, but was tackled by a Denver player.

By the time security had finally contained Smith, they were nearly at the opposite end of the court from where the fighting started.

"I was very disappointed," Stern said. "Clearly, we're not getting through or players in certain circumstances just don't want to be restrained. I would suggest that those players will not have long careers in the NBA."

There was speculation Thomas would be penalized for his comments to Anthony. Stern acknowledged hearing about it, but said he relied only on "definitive information" when handing out punishments.

Stern made it clear he was annoyed by comments from Thomas, who didn't back away on Monday from the Knicks' postgame assertions that some of the problems were caused by Denver coach George Karl leaving his starters on the floor too long in a blowout.

"I can't speak for him, but he put his players in a tough position," Thomas said. "I think he put his players in a very bad position."

Karl accused Thomas of a "premeditated" act, underscoring his disgust with the New York coach with expletives.

"It was directed by Isiah," he said. "I think his actions after the game were despicable. He made a bad situation worse. I'll swear on my children's life that I never thought about running up the score. I wanted to get a big win on the road.

"My team has had trouble holding leads at the end of games," he added. "I didn't want the score to get under 10 points because if it would've gotten under 10 points it would've had a negative feeling on my team."

Karl has bigger problems now. He'll be without Anthony until Jan. 20, and Smith will be gone until Jan. 8. That duo combines for more than 48 points a game. *AP*

Depleted Knicks, Nuggets find ways to win

NEW YORK—STEPHON MARBURY'S layup just beat the buzzer, and gave the undermanned New York Knicks a stunning 97-96 overtime victory over the Utah Jazz in the NBA on Monday.

Two nights after a brawl with the Denver Nuggets that led to 10 ejections, New York—down to eight players because of suspensions and injuries—showed the right kind of fight. The Knicks bounced back from a dismal first quarter and knocked off the Northwest Division leaders.

Marbury had 29 points and eight assists and Jamal Crawford added 18 points—all after halftime—and the Knicks found a way to win despite making only two field goals in the final eight minutes of regulation to get forced into the extra period.

Deron Williams scored 23 points for Utah, including a jumper that gave the Jazz a 96-95 lead with 3 seconds left. But David Lee found Marbury streaking up the left side with his inbounds pass, and Marbury made a layup that was ruled good after a review by the officials.

At Denver, the home team didn't need its top two scorers against Washington.

Playing without Carmelo Anthony and JR Smith, starting 15 and 10-game suspensions respectively, the Nuggets blew an early 25-point lead but held on for a 117-108 victory over the Wizards.

Anthony, Smith and Nene were all suspended earlier in the day for their roles in a brawl against New York on Saturday.

At East Rutherford, New Jersey, Jason Kidd recorded his 81st career triple-double and Nenad Krstic had 26 points for the Nets, who tripped the Golden State Warriors, 105-97.

Kidd finished with 10 points, 12 assists and 11 rebounds and the Nets won for the fifth time in 16 games. The triple-double was the sixth of the season for the Nets point guard. *AP*

COMPLETE NBA RESULTS: New York 97, Utah 96 OT; Miami 101, New Orleans 99; New Jersey 105, Golden State 97; Memphis 134, Seattle 126, 2OT; Denver 117, Washington 108; Dallas 109, Sacramento 91

COACH George Karl leads a depleted Denver five into the court. AFP

NBA ON BASKETBALL TV

Game Today

9:30 a.m.—LA Lakers vs. Chicago (replays @ 4 p.m. & 9:30 p.m.)

Even in victory, Tiger haunted by tears, failure

THOUSAND OAKS, CALIFORNIA—Tiger Woods' year can be summed up in a series of snapshots on the 18th green at Royal Liverpool. One minute he thrust both arms in the air after winning the British Open, the next he sobbed on the shoulder of his caddie.

Even now, Woods has a hard time watching his most meaningful tournament of 2006, his first victory since his father died of cancer. He has seen replays, but only until he taps in for par on the final hole.

Right before the tears start to flow, Woods shuts off the tape.

"I skip past it," he said in an interview over the weekend. "I refuse to watch it."

Woods can find success in the record books—eight US PGA Tour victories, including six in a row, two of them majors. He found loss at his father's grave in May.

If there was ever a case where someone could get Player of the Year and Comeback Player of the Year, this might be it.

The first half was a blur.

Despite winning his first two starts, Woods relied on others' failures, whether it was Jose Maria Olazabal missing a 4-foot putt in a playoff at Torrey Pines or Ernie Els hitting into the water in a playoff at Dubai.

At Doral, Woods won the day Earl Woods turned 74.

But as his father's condition got worse, so did Woods' game.

Even though he collected two more majors to run his career total to 12, it's the final round of the Masters, where he finished three shots behind Phil Mickelson, that sticks with him.

WOODS AFP

"That's something I still continue to think about, even to this day," Woods said. "It was my last round that my Dad ever watched me play. Knowing that going into it, if I could have given him one last shot, some positive memories before he goes, it would have been huge."

It was the first time Earl Woods did not make the trip to Augusta, and Woods believed then it would be the last time his father would watch him on TV in a major.

"It was the only time I saw him try too hard," caddie Steve Williams later said.

When he won the American Express Championship in October for his sixth straight US tour victory, a British TV reporter asked Woods how he would remember his year. Woods didn't hesitate in saying, "a loss."

The reference was to his father. What turned things around was three hours one Thursday afternoon outside Chicago.

He had missed the cut for the first time in a major at the US Open, and it wasn't really close. He shot rounds of 76-76 in his first tournament back after taking nine weeks off because of his father's death.

His next round was a pedestrian 72 at the Western Open that left him in danger of missing another cut. He summoned coach Hank Haney to the range at Cog Hill, and they went back to the basics.

"I said, 'Let's forget everything that's happened. Let's work on what we did at the beginning of the year that won the first two events, and let's get everything organized,'" Woods said.

"No other practice session was more important than that one."

Picking his best shot of the year is never easy. Woods goes back to the range at the Western Open.

"There was a series of shots, but they weren't in competition," he said. "It was a practice session I had at the Western when I hit balls about three hours out there."

"Then," he said, "I just built upon that for the rest of the year."

The rest of the year was as good as he ever has played. Woods not only made the cut in Chicago, he tied for second, two shots behind Trevor Immelman. It took another two months and six events before he played a tournament without going home with a trophy.

Since missing the cut at Winged Foot, Woods has not finished worse than second in stroke play.

"He's winning 55 percent of the tournaments he plays," Fred Couples said. "He's probably ahead of Shaq's free throw percentage."

Woods' benchmark might always be 2000, when he won nine times, including three straight majors, and completed the career Grand Slam at age 24. Woods says this summer was better, considering what he dealt with off the course.

It was a year of big wins and enormous losses, a constant conflict between joy and sadness, all of which was captured at Royal Liverpool.

"I don't know if that's a highlight, me breaking down and crying," Woods said with a grin.

But relevant?

"Without a doubt," he said. *AP*

Ozamiz draws first blood vs Spring cagers

ILIGAN CITY—BACK-TO-BACK TITLIST OZAMIZ Cotta drew first blood in its best-of-three championship series with Spring-Tagaytay Monday night by scoring a slim 73-70 victory in the 2006 Spring Cooking Oil-NBC National Cup basketball tournament at the MSU-IIT gym here.

Last conference's MVP Marlon Basco, Bruce Dacia and three other Cotta Shrine cagers scored in double figures to turn back the gutsy Cooking Oil Masters of NBC president Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla and league EVP Mayor Bambol Tolentino after trailing 35-37 and 53-54 in the second and third quarters.

Basco topscored with 14 points, Dacia added 12 and PBL veteran Lou Gatumbato, Leo Bat-og and Elbert Alberto chipped in 10 apiece as Mayor Reynaldo Parojinog's Ozamiz dribblers moved a win away from recording NBC's first three-peat.

Nani Epondulan led Spring-Tagaytay with a game-high 16 points.

Game 2 is scheduled today at the Gov. Angel Medina Sr. gym in Ozamiz City.

Ozamiz surged to a 20-12 first quarter lead, but Spring-Tagaytay erupted for 25 points in the second canto to lead 37-35 at the turn.

SPORTS

Asistio gains top seeding; Bibat up

By Musong R. Castillo

CANLUBANG, LAGUNA—TONLITS ASISTIO, the talented teener who was dropped from the national pool earlier in the year, fired a two-under-par 70 yesterday to bag top seeding in the men's division of the 2006 RP Amateurs at The Country Club here.

Asistio turned in a 36-34 card built around three birdies and a bogey to total a level 144 for the 36-hole classification and draw No. 32 Joel Opaco (83-158) at the start of match play today.

First round leader Jay Bayron struggled to a 74 and finished with the No. 2 ranking after winding up with a 146, colliding with Asian Games teammate Gene Bondoc in the other half of the draw.

Bondoc finished with a 157 tally after a 78 for 31st spot even as Michael Bibat, the individual bronze medal winner in Doha, Qatar, finished in 19th spot after assembling a 71 to march on.

Bibat, the tall and hefty mainstay of Southwoods in the PAL Interclub, got off strong and never looked back, finishing with a 154 tally to make the match play stage.

Louie Dacudao fired a 76 to finish third with a 148 and earn a clash with No. 30 qualifier Kim Chang-hoi, the Philippine-based Korean who has campaigned in many local amateur events. Kim fired a second round 80 for 157 and 30th place.

Other notables who advanced were National Caddies' Open products Mark Fernando (6th-75-150), Rufino Bayron (9th-73-151), Mario Labajo (20th-78-154) and Jonel Ababa (23rd-80-155), and former Canlubang Open winner Boyet Saragoza (10th-71-151).

The top two seeds in the ladies' division belonged to youngsters Mia Piccio and Crystal Superal, who turned in a 73 and 72, respectively.

Only 16 advanced in the distaff side, with Asian Games teammates Dottie Ardina and Cyna Rodriguez drawing each other in the first round.

The world junior champ Ardina pooled a second round 77 and finished 10th with a 156 tally, while Rodriguez was seventh after a 72 for 153.

Piccio, who lost to Frances Bondad, 3&2 in the 36-hole finals at the Marapara in Bacolod last year, turned in a 145 aggregate and will collide with obscure Ting Ting Cao, the 16th player in the group who turned in two 81s for 162.

The biggest casualty in the ladies side was Debbie de Villa, the reigning medal play RP Ladies champion who skied to a 94 and failed to advance after a 174, 12 strokes off the last place.

Former RP Ladies Open champion Carmellete Villaroman matched par 72 for a 148, finishing in fourth to seal a duel with Paulina Sotto, who had an 80 and a 159 in 13th place.

Anya Tanpinco, the third Doha veteran in the field, wound up fifth with two 76s for a 152 and will be paired with Lora Roberto, who had two 79s for a 158.

Regina de Guzman (77-153) and Bambee dela Paz (78-155) drew each other in the match play by finishing eighth and ninth, respectively.

MIA Piccio studies her line of putt at hole No. 6. ROMY HOMILLADA

Things out of control, says Guiao

By Francis Ochoa

ALL ONE HAS TO DO IS LISTEN TO COACH Yeng Guiao and know that things can't get any closer than this in the Talk 'N Text-PBA Philippine Cup.

"We're trying to keep our semis hopes alive because things are no longer in our control," admitted coach Yeng Guiao after Red Bull's crucial victory over Purefoods.

This from a guy whose team is at third place, one game out of the No. 2 spot, which is the outright semifinal ticket, and just a game and a half behind the No. 1 team.

Even coach Jong Uichico, the think tank of the league-leading Barangay Ginebra, refuses to acknowledge claiming an outright slot, saying all he is looking for is to patch whatever holes his team might still have.

"We just want to get better every game," said the low-key mentor.

And so it boils down to this: No. 1 Barangay Ginebra, No. 2 San Miguel and No. 3 Red Bull are now in a very exclusive footrace for the two outright semifinal berths in the league.

Those two spots afford the team that owns them a chance to skip the wild card phase.

The Kings have managed to keep a hold of the top spot with their 12-4 record, while the Beermen, after routing Talk 'N Text Phone Pals, 114-102, to notch their 12th win in 17 outings are in second place.

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Gin Kings eye semis vs Barako

By Musong R. Castillo

GAMES TODAY
(*Araneta Coliseum*)
4:35 p.m. - Alaska vs Welcoat
7:20 p.m. - Red Bull vs Ginebra

GIFTS ARE GIVEN NOT ONLY ON Christmas, and this season does not necessarily mean the time for being kind in the PBA.

Barangay Ginebra clashes with a determined Red Bull side tonight, shooting for no less than an outright semifinal spot in the Talk 'N Text Philippine Cup that would gift-wrap the same to sister team San Miguel.

The 7:20 p.m. game at the Araneta Coliseum in Cubao will be the first of two shots the Gin Kings have in nailing a Final Four berth, and a win would close the door on the Barako and give the idle Beermen a free ride.

"If we can get it Wednesday (today), why wait for Christmas day," coach Jong Uichico asked as his Kings wind up their classification round schedule on Monday against the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals.

Red Bull is the only other team with a shot at the semis, and a win tonight would not really guarantee Yeng Guiao and his boys of a slot as the best they could do is win 12 games and the Beermen and the Kings could go for 13.

"We don't have full control of our fate, but whatever it is that's in our control, we'll try to keep," said Guiao, who will be assured of an automatic quarterfinal seat if his Barako trounce the Kings.

Ginebra, which has a 12-4 record, will be coming into the game with its confidence at a high after annihilating Sta. Lucia, 109-89, on Friday.

San Miguel, which opened up with a 0-3 card but has won 12 of its last 14 games since a key trade, can avoid complications of a playoff, granting Red Bull wins tonight, with a victory over Air21 on Christmas.

Sta. Lucia, which led this tournament for most part until a critical losing streak snuffed out its semifinal chances, defending champion Purefoods and the Phone Pals have been left to slug it out for quarterfinal berths.

Three slots are available for that round, and the Phone Pals will drop out of it with a loss to the Kings, while Sta. Lucia and Purefoods can avoid the wildcard phase with victories over Coca-Cola and Alaska, respectively, on Friday.

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
Thursday, December 20, 2006

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5	Nickelodeon				PBA				Big News	PBA					Sentro	Frontlines		Araw-Araw Prem-yo Sa Resbo	Letty La Mas Fea
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Inocente De Ti	Yu-Gi-Oh GX	Bet The Vandel Buster	Pangako Sa 'Yo	TV Patrol World		Kapamilya Deal Or No Deal	Super Inggo (8:15 PM)		Maging Sino Ka Man	Pinoy Dream Academy		Bandila	Probe	Mirada De Mujer
AXN		Las Vegas (Season 2)		The Shield 4		The Amazing Race Asia		Ripley's Believe It or Not		The 4400		Ultimate Guinness World Records	Samsung Sports World	World's Most Amazing Videos		CSI: Miami (Season 4)		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Season 6)	
bTV	NBA Jam Local	TV Shopping		EUROLeague Moscow vs. Barcelona			NBA Live	NBA: Lakers @ Bulls					NBA Live	NBA Fantasy Hoops	NBA: Raptors @ Suns				
Cartoon Network																	Aqua Teen Hunger Force		
Cinema One		Dear Mama				Yamashita: The Tiger's Treasure				Kuya			Persona	Paradise Inn (9:15 PM)				Pinay Pie	
Cinemax		It's A Wonderful Life				Judicial Consent (5:15 PM)				Blade Squad				Rage Of Honor				Shattered Image	
CNN		Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia	World News Asia	Your World Today			
Crime/Suspense		Bones		Law and Order: Special Victims Unit + 24		Profiler		City Confidential		Law and Order		Law and Order: Special Victims Unit + 24		John Q				Law Firm + Revelations	
Discovery Channel	Mean Machines	Perfect Disaster		American Chopper		Unsolved History		Man Made Marvels		Wild Discovery		Hour China		King Tut's Mystery Tomb Opened		A Haunting		Blueprint For Disaster	
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Un-takative Bunny	Mickey Mouseworks	Lilo & Stitch	Emperor's New School	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			American Dragon	Kim Possible	Buzz On Maggie	Totally Spies	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN		Atlantic Coast Conf.: Kent State Vs Duke				Extreme Programming Sports Max 2006/07		English Premier Football League				Women's Pro Billiards '06		Sportscenter Asia	NBA Fastbreak	Motorsport Asia	Classic Boxing: Henry Cooper vs Ali		Sportscenter Asia
ETC		America's Next Top Model 5		Change of Heart	Elimidate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	The Tyra Banks Show		Veronica Mars Season 2		Beauty And The Geek		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
ETC 2nd Avenue		Starting Over		The Maury Povich Show		The Jerry Springer Show		Dr. Phil		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition	The Ellen (Degeneres) Show		Wheel Of Fortune	Jeopardy	Cold Turkey 2		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record With Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Makita Ka Lang Muli	Now and Forever	Into The Sun		Dragonball Z	Ghost Fighter	Jewel In The Palace		24 Oras	Captain Barbell	Atlantika (7:45 PM)		Bakekang	A Rosy Life (9:15 PM)		Nuts Entertainment			Saksi
Hallmark Channel				Judging Amy		Just Cause		McLeod's Daughters		Strong Medicine		Dinotopia		Judging Amy					
HBO		True Believer				The Big Preview: Happy Feet	Madeline			Fearless				Lemony Snicket's A Series Of Unfortunate Events				Striptease	
Hero TV	Wild Cats	Sunny Pig	Inuyasha III	Mirmo de Pon	Saiyuki Reload	Naruto	Monkey Turn	Gundam Seed Destiny	Full Metal Panic	Galaxy Angels	Voltes V Evolution	Inuyasha III	Mirmo de Pon	Astroboy	Three-Eyed One	Naruto	Gosaurer	Wild Cats	Yu-Gi-Oh GX
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	New Life Shopping Network		EBC Earth Files		Japan Video Topics/ Arts		Travel Philippines	Good Take	Up Close & Personal	IBC News Tonite		
JackTV		Raw				Cheat	Filter	Afterburn		Mad TV		That 70s Show	Arrested Development	Last Comic Standing		The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Chappelle's Show	The Late Show David Letterman	
Lifestyle Network		30 Minute Meals	Sweet Dreams	Rachel Ray		Smart Solutions	DIY: Crafts	Food Network Special		Martha		Style Star	Fashion Police	Rachel Ray		Isaac		Fine Living Special	
MTV Philippines		MTV Screen	VH1 Presents: Heavy : D' Story of Metal pt2		Yo Momma	Score	MTV Hits			Get Spotted	MTV Screen	TRL		Yo Momma	Score	My Super Sweet 16	Homecoming	VH1 Presents: Heavy : D' Story of Metal pt3	
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYXlog	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	OPM MYX	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		MYX Live!		D'yan Banda	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	MYXlog
National Geographic		Nat Geographic Specials		Is it Real S2		Planet Wild S3	Amazing Moments	Top 5		Nat Geographic Specials		WOW!		Seconds From Disaster		Is it Real S2		Outbreak Investigation	
NBN					Dyos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Sila?	Teledyaryo W/ Rey Langit & Angelique Lazo		4th Cycling Search	The Final Say...ChaCha			Teledyaryo Final Edition		World Pool Championship					
Net 25	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	In Focus	Euromaxx	INC Chronicles (English)	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	Ang Pagbubunyag		News Beat (Live)		OpenLine Live	Kapatid Sa Hanapbuhay	INC Chronicles (English)	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	Ang Tamang Daan		World Report	In Focus	DWTV Journal News	Euromaxx
Nickelodeon	Chalkzone	The Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	SpongeBob SquarePants	My Life As A Teenage Robot	Danny Phantom	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	Drake & Josh	Unfabulous	SpongeBob SquarePants	The Fairly Odd Parents	All That	Romeo	As Told By Ginger	My Dad The Rock Star	
PBO			Rocky N Rolly				Ginintuang Tala				Untouchable Family				Bertud Ng Putik				Bukas May Umaga
Qtv	Pawnshop No. 8	Samurai X	Hikaru No Go	The Prince Of Tennis	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Winter Sonata	Irene	Emperor Of The Sea	Takeshi's Castle	Now Na!		News On Q	Balikbayan		Irene	Women Of Worth
RPN 9	TV Shopping	Real Lives, Real People		Roundtable Discussion	Mr. Fighting	RPN Aksyon Balita		Complete Savages	Jake In Progress	Iron Chef		Summerland		Extreme Makeover: Home Edition		Newswatch Now	Cargo For Truth		Kerygma
SBN 21								Sony Music Video				Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		Sony Music Video		Sony Music Video	
Solar Sports						FIVB Phuket-W		Billiards: US 9 Ball		Sagupaan	Bikini Destination	ECW		Undisputed		Sportsdesk		Poker Heaven	
Star Movies		One Fine Day				Thief Lord			Jurassic Park (6:45 PM)					Jumanji			Fastlane (10:45PM)		
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		General Hospital		Desire Table For Three		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Seinfeld	Ed		Grey's Anatomy		Desire Table For Three		Seinfeld	Ed
Studio 23		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYXlog	Blog	Pinoy Dream Academy	Wazzup Wazzup	CSI	Las Vegas (8:15 PM)		It's A Guy Thing		News Central	Crash (10:45PM)		MYXlog
UnTV				KNC Show	Kakampi Mo Ang Batas		Kaka at Clase Kaagapay Nyo		Public Hearing	Make My Day		Ang Dating Daan (8:15 PM)							

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

IN THIS ISSUE

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- **Review sought on water** firms' profit scheme /B12

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BUSINESS

Editor Raul O. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Narisma

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Income tax collection falls short of target

, Republic of the Philippine
ber 20 ADB Headq Manila

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo exchanges pleasantries with Haruhiko Kuroda, president and chair of the board of directors of the Asian Development Bank, during the bank's 40th anniversary celebration held at its headquarters in Ortigas. EDWIN BACASMAS

BIR blames declining interest rates, fewer T-bill auctions

By Michelle V. Remo

INCOME TAX COLLECTION FROM JANUARY TO OCTOBER FELL short of the official target by 6 percent, slimming the chances of the Bureau of Internal Revenue to hit the full-year tax collection goal set by the national government.

Documents from the BIR showed that income tax collection in the first 10 months of the year reached P308.91 billion as against the P327.08-billion goal for the period.

Income taxes account for 60 percent of the BIR's revenues.

Compared with last year's figure, income tax collection in the first 10 months of this year was up by 16 percent from P265.68 billion.

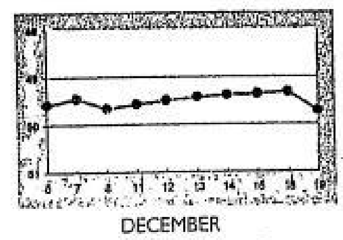
The year-on-year increase in the collection of income tax was partly attributed to the increase in the corporate income tax rate to 35 percent from 32 percent as provided in the Value-Added Tax Reform Law that took effect in November last year.

The BIR said the target set for this year was too high and there were factors beyond its control that led to the lower-than-expected

INCOME/ B4

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



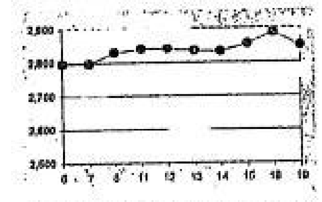
DECEMBER

P 49.72 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., Dec. 19, 2006

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Shares close lower

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 0.98-PERCENT lower yesterday on profit-taking after recent sustained gains, dealers said.

Investors locked in recent gains in blue-chips in the absence of fresh leads, dealers said.

The composite index fell 28.12 points at 2,849.71 after moving between 2,845.26 and 2,886.09.

SHARES/ B7

Regional marts weaken on Thai capital controls

By Doris C. Dumlao

THAILAND'S BOLD MOVE TO CURB the baht's sharp appreciation yesterday created ripples in the local financial markets but the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas was quick to assure the public that it would not resort to similar measures restricting capital flows.

At the spot foreign exchange market Philippine Dealing System, the peso shed 40 centavos to close at 49.72 against the dollar yesterday, reflecting the sell-off across regional currencies following Thailand's tighter capital controls.

The main-share Philippine Stock Exchange composite index also lost 28.12 points to close at 2,849.71 yesterday.

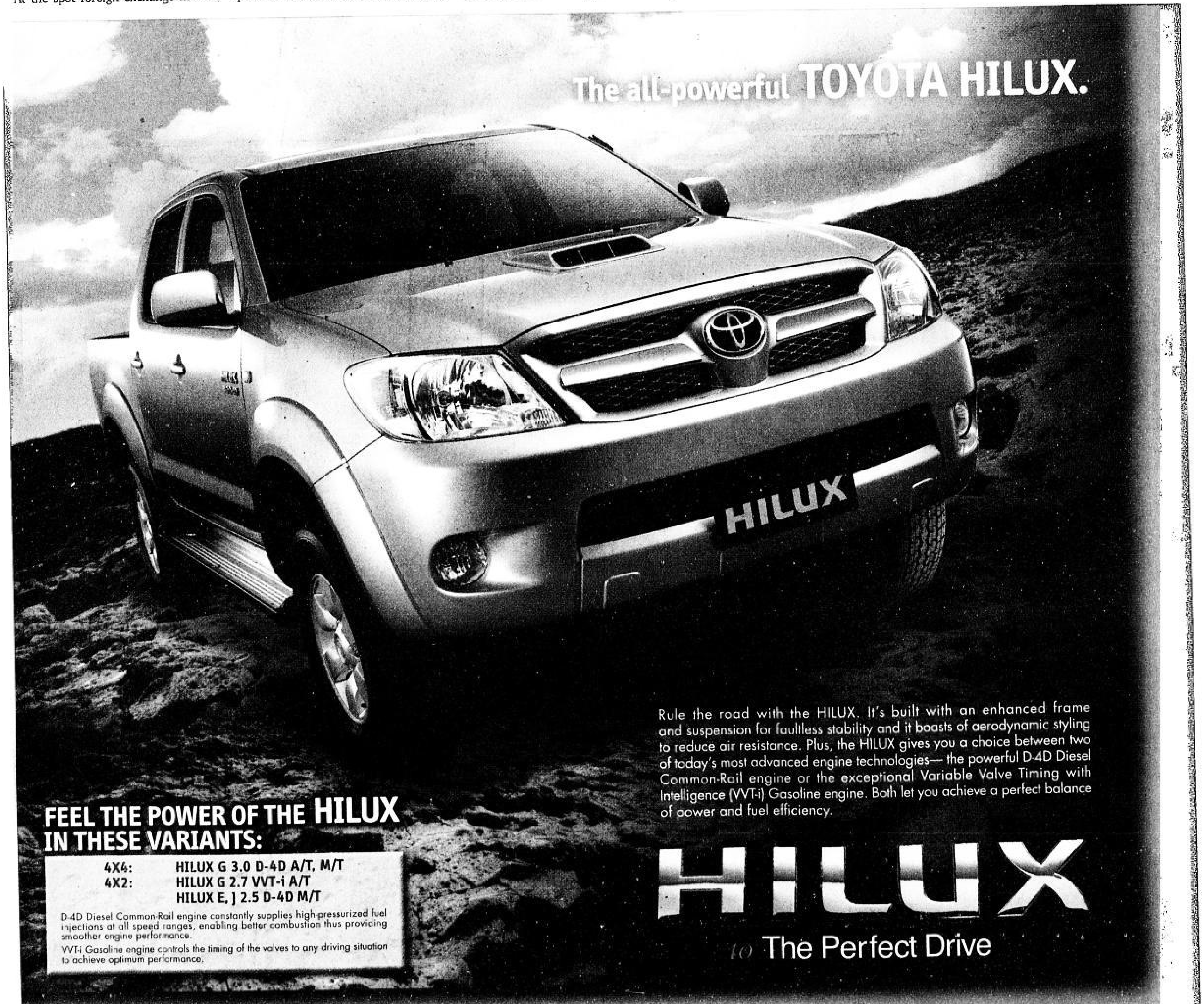
"Country-specific conditions require specific measures. In the case of the Philippines, we believe that a liberal and market-oriented policy stance on capital flows remains appropriate," BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said.

"Foreign exchange inflows are an important driver of economic growth. We shall ensure the consistency of our policy with this principle," he said.

On Monday night, the Thai central bank unveiled a strategy to discourage the influx of short-term or "hot money" in the local financial system and force speculators to keep their money in the country for at least a year. It required 30 percent of non-trade related foreign exchange sold for baht to be deposited interest-free with the central bank for a year.

Investors pulling funds out of Thailand—the epicenter of the 1997 Asian

REGIONAL/ B7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Mutual funds still struggling to attract business

Weak distribution, regulations blamed

By Daxim L. Lucas

THE SAVE AND LEARN EQUITY FUND RUN by First Metro Asset Management Inc. (Fami) earned a return of 64.7 percent for its investors over the last year, making it the best performing mutual fund in the local market.

Its sister unit, the Save and Learn Fixed Income Fund, earned 15.2 percent over the previous year, also making it one of the best performers in its category.

"We are very happy with our performance, and it usually sells itself," said Fami assistant vice president Edwin Valeroso. But much more needs to be done in terms of reaching more clients for the company and for the industry as a whole.

Indeed, a cursory examination of mutual funds accredited with the Investment Company Association of the Philippines (Icap) show that most outperformed the broad markets where they were invested in.

In other words, an investor would have made more money—on the average—had he deposited his funds with investment managers rather than if he invested it himself.

More importantly, none of the investors would have lost had they parked their money in mutual funds over the past year, regardless of which fund they chose.

"Chances are, the investment manager can deliver better returns because of his expertise in the field," Icap president Fernando Jose Sison III said in an interview.

Despite this empirical evidence, however, investors are not flocking to mutual funds and the local industry remains relatively underdeveloped by international standards.

Proof of this is the fact that assets managed by local mutual funds remain minute relative to the size of the financial system.

Minuscule funds

According to Sison, the country's 35 mutual funds had under management only P69 billion in assets at the end of October.

"Of this amount, P57.5 billion are invested in bond funds," Sison said, noting that this showed that the mindset of many Filipinos remain slanted toward "saving" rather than "investing."

This amount pales in comparison with those placed in unit investment trust funds (UITFs) which, at one point earlier this year, stood close to P300 billion.

UITFs are mututal fund-like investment products sold by banks to clients and parceled out in units rather than shares. Because they are bank products, they are subject to regulatory reserve requirements. But almost all other rules are stacked in their favor.

At present, UITFs, which are actively promoted by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas and sold through bank branches, are the nemesis of mutual funds.

Even after the "run" on UITFs last summer, the industry still holds about P160 billion in funds—more than double that of mutual funds.

"Our problem really is distribution," said Sison, who also heads BPI Asset Management Inc. "UITFs can be sold through bank branches while our products cannot."

Instead, mutual funds must rely on a network of salesmen—most of whom specialize in selling insurance products—to generate new business.

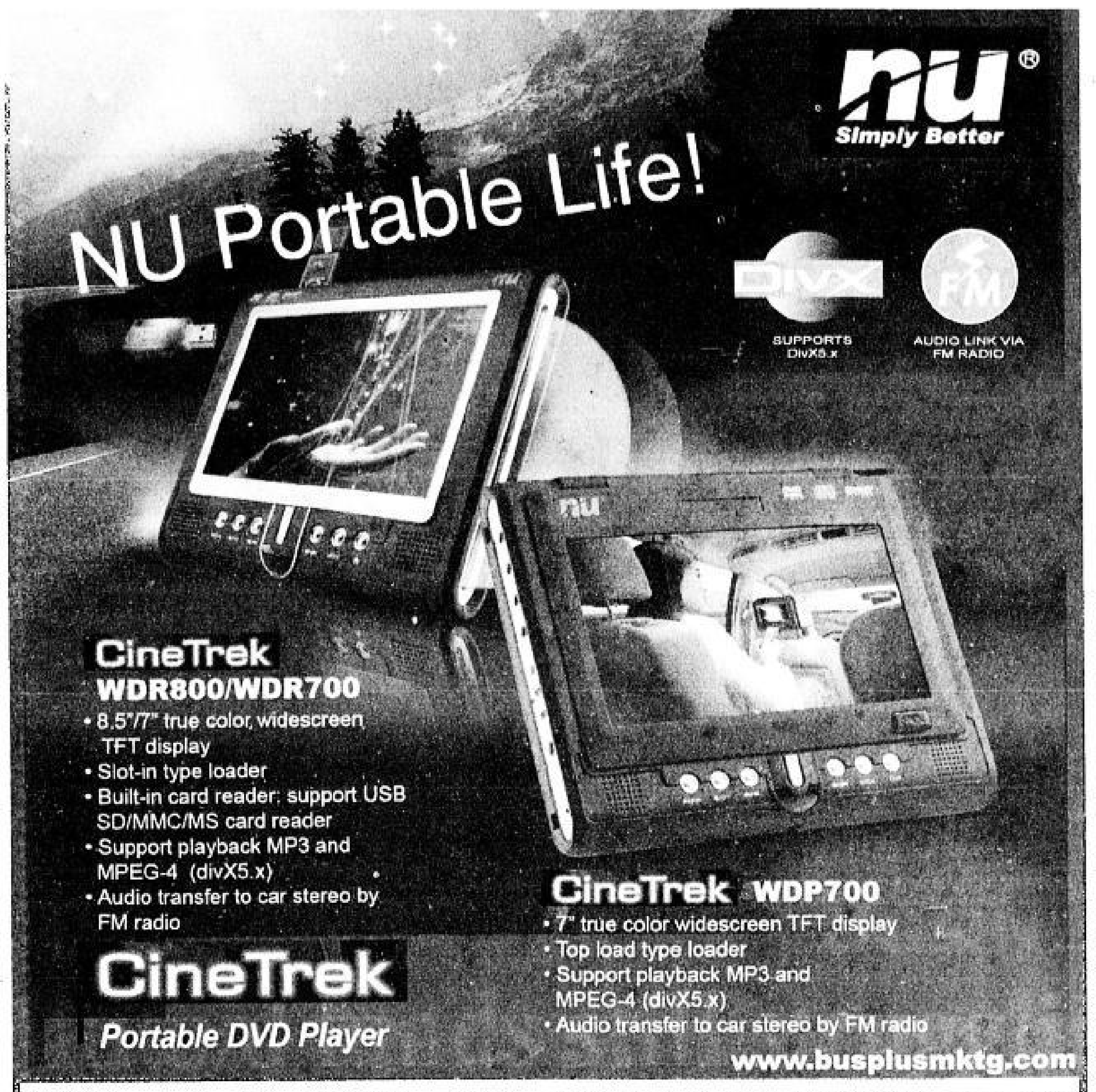
Even this system has its weakness because these salesmen are more interested in selling insurance products, which usually offer better commissions, than mutual fund products, said Grepalife Asset Management Corp. general manager Efren Ll. Cruz.

"On top of that, the salesmen have to be licensed to sell these products, too, and the test for this license is very difficult," he said in an interview.

Distribution woes

Cruz, whose Grepalife fixed-income products are the best performing funds invested in dollar-denominated bonds, says this distribution problem directly hinders the development of the industry.

MUTUAL FUNDS/ B6



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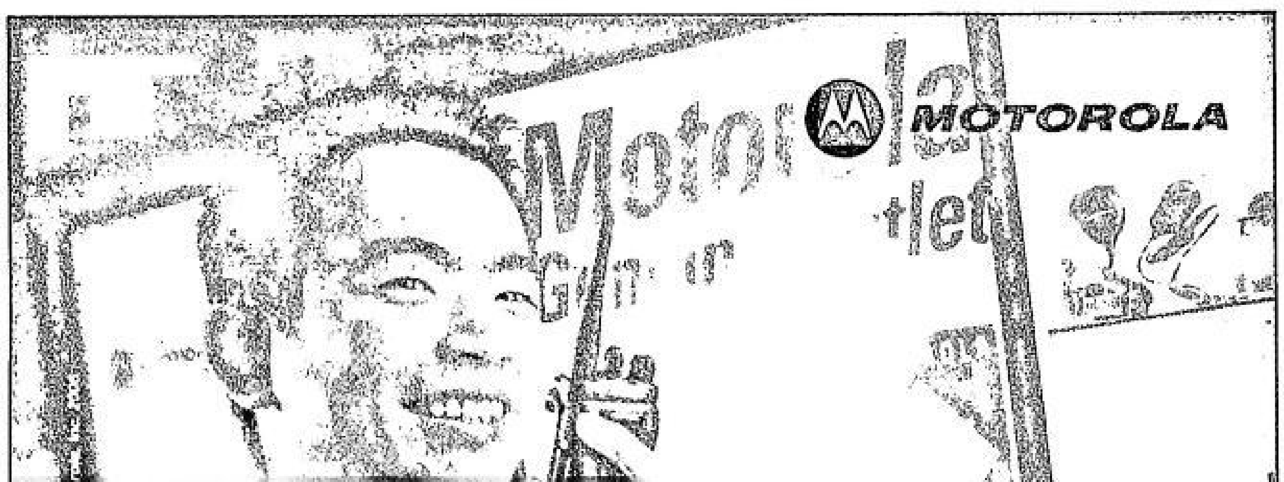
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Wattmaster Corp. (02-7124846)
Visayas: Hello Marketing (03-2533493)
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Solar Communication (02-7330464)
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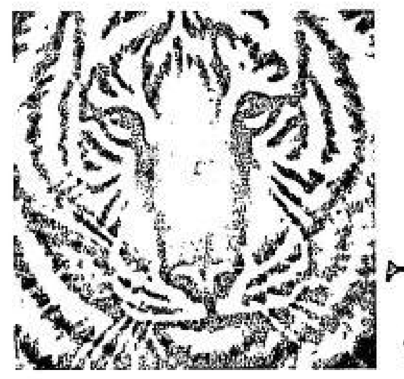

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Seminar Coverage:
Day 1
Medical Transcription Overview: Then and Now
(Backgrounder on how medical transcription started)
US Medical Transcription Industry outlook
(MT trends, Global MT Markets, global players)
Philippines: MT outsourcing destination of choice
(State of the Philippine MT industry: strengths & weaknesses of local MT operators)
Starting your MT Business
(How to set-up an MT business: identifying the key elements and components of the business)
Building the IT Infrastructure
(Description of hardware & software component of an MT facility)
Curriculum development & Training
(Discussion on crafting an effective MT training curriculum MT testing & assessment, etc.)
HR Screening & Hiring
(Setting standards for manpower hiring, qualifications, testing & implementing a workable salary compensation scheme, etc.)
Day 2
HIPAA & Data Security
(Description of facility systems configured to comply with the HIPAA Law; Regulations and policies on data security and confidentiality)
Marketing an MT Company
(Setting the right pricing; employing marketing materials and promotional activities; Closing contracts & winning clients)
Making your MT Facility Earn
(Employing strategies to maximize profit, analyzing cost effectiveness of operational cost, cash flow, diversifying operation, income analysis; Expansion/growth trends & strategies, etc.)
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(Professional operation, ethical standards and value of affiliation with industry associations, etc.)
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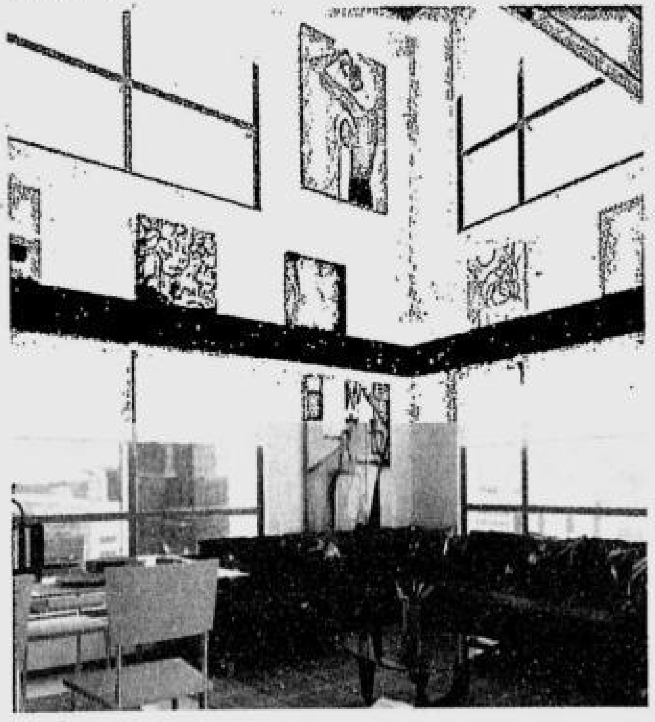

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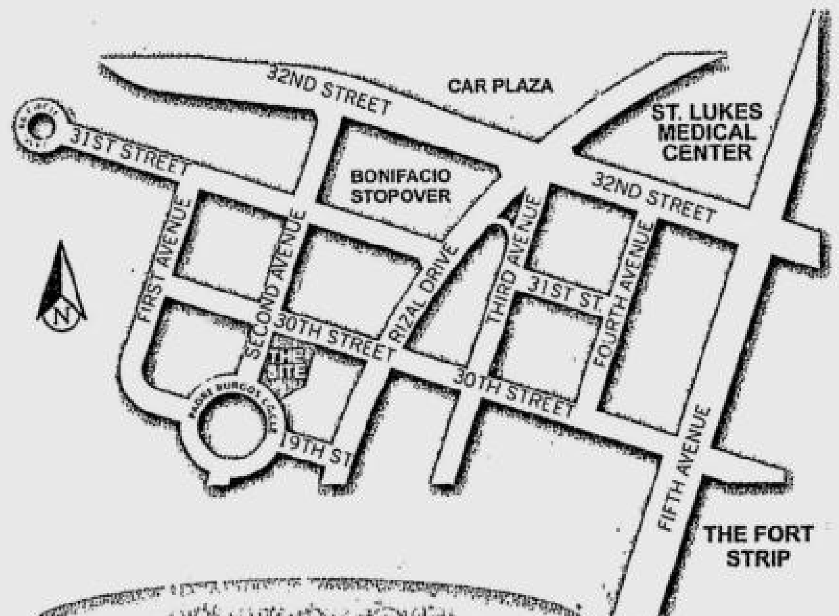
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SMIC to borrow P10B in H1

Bond float, shares issuance eyed

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SM INVESTMENTS CORP. (SMIC), THE flagship company of taipan Henry Sy, is borrowing P10 billion in the first half of next year to finance projects and pay portion of the cost of acquiring additional Equitable PCI Bank stake, company chief financial officer Jose Sio told reporters Monday night.

Sio said the amount could be raised through the flotation of long-term bonds or issuance of preferred shares.

Of the P10-billion planned borrowing, about P4 billion will be used to pay in June the second installment for the additional Equitable PCI Bank shares the group bought.

The purchase of all the Equitable PCI Bank shares tendered, including those pledged by pension fund Social Security System, would cost the SM group about P34.49 billion. The SSS had agreed to sell its 26-percent stake in the bank to Banco de Oro but this has yet to be cleared by the Supreme Court. The SSS voted in favor of a merger between Banco de Oro Universal Bank and Equitable EPCIBank.

SY

The two banks announced last November a merger plan that would create the second biggest bank with assets of P613 billion.

Another P2.5 billion of the borrowings will be used to partially finance projects near Mall of Asia, including SMIC's 10-storey building for business process outsourcing (BPO) firms and the 42,500-square meter SMX Convention Center.

Some P2 billion will be spent for the development of the group's ecotourism project, called Hamilo, in Nasugbu, Batangas. The project aims to convert 13 coves into an integrated network of coastal resort communities over 20 to 30 years. The first cove is scheduled for launching in the first quarter of 2007.

SMIC is raising its capital spending next year to P20 billion from P15 billion largely for its tourism and mall projects.

Sio said SMIC would likely finance 35 percent to 40 percent of next year's projects with dollar-denominated borrowings. He said that out of the P20-billion programmed spending for 2007, P7 billion will be for new malls in Bacolod and Taytay and the expansion of its Cebu, Pampanga and Fairview malls; P7 billion for the Nasugbu, Batangas project, and P2 billion for the expansion of its network of department stores and supermarkets.

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V MALL Greenhills San Juan Bridgeway, facing Connesa 727-4921	SM FAIRVIEW Basement 418-7540	CEBU 417-8286

Ayala subsidiary earmarks $10M for expansion

ELECTRONICS FIRM INTEGRATED MICROelectronics Inc. (IMI), a unit of conglomerate Ayala Corp., is setting aside more than $10 million for expansion and improvements of facilities in the Philippines, Singapore and China next year, company senior vice president Maria Rosa Santos said in a briefing yesterday.

IMI has 11 manufacturing plants in Asia (two in China and one in Singapore), Europe and North America. In the Philippines, IMI has manufacturing hubs in Laguna and Cavite.

Santos said IMI might set up a new manufacturing facility in Hanoi, Vietnam next year. It is also scouting for a new location for another manufacturing facility in China. These two plans, however, are not yet included in the $10-million budget for next year.

IMI president Arthur Tan said he was optimistic that the company would post more than 20 percent growth in earnings this year and a 100-percent growth in revenue, largely due to the contribution of Speedy-Tech, the company's latest acquisition.

Officials declined to give specific figures.

Tab said he was hoping the company could grow its sales to $1 billion by 2011 by enhancing design and product development capabilities, investing in emerging technologies, strengthening marketing and sales and acquiring electronics manufacturing service companies.

The company last year completed its merger with Singapore-based electronics manufacturing service (EMS) provider Speedy-Tech Electronics Ltd. to create a formidable player in the Asia Pacific region.

To further strengthen its foothold in international markets, IMI this year forged several marketing alliances with German electronics firm Bus Electronik, Japanese printed circuit board developer Pulax Corp. and US firm Pensar.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

Income ...

From page B1

income tax collection.

Internal Revenue Commissioner Jose Mario Buñag had stressed that the reduction in the volume of treasury bills and bonds issued by the national government and the declining interest rate were adversely affecting income tax collection.

BIR documents showed that of the income tax collection in the first 10 months of this year, P27.82 billion was accounted for by taxes on income from government securities. This was 24-percent short of the P36.8-billion target.

"That is why we want the tax on T-bills taken away from our target because we have no control over its collection," Buñag had said. He suggested that the collection target for taxes on income from government securities be transferred to the Bureau of the Treasury (BTr), the agency tasked with issuing treasury bills and bonds.

Buñag added that income tax collection was dependent on the country's economic growth. He said that while actual economic growth did not always hit the target, fiscal authorities should make the BIR's target flexible and adjusted according to the actual economic growth.

The BIR cited the declining interest rate for the weak collection of taxes on income from bank deposits. Taxes on income from bank deposits accounted for P15.9 billion, or 34-percent short of the P24-billion target.

Corporate income tax accounted for P157.6 billion of total for the first 10 months while individual income tax contributed P107.55 billion.

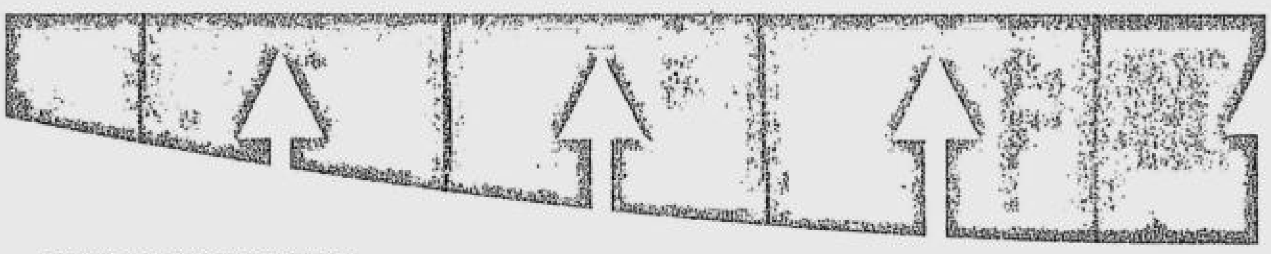
PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 19, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. BankInc.	7.5	7.5	7.2	7.2	45,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	45	45.5	44.5	45	1,414,500
Bank of the Phil. Islands	65	65	63	63	3,940,800
China Banking Corp.	695	695	690	690	6,860
Citystate Savings Bank	19	19	19	19	600
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.49	0.49	0.48	0.48	6,520,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	79.5	82	79.5	80.5	169,600
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	52	52	51.5	51.5	5,387,200
Philippine National Bank	44	44	42.5	42.5	42,000
Phil. Savings Bank	48	48	48	48	25,300
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	25.5	25.5	25	25	90,500
Security Bank Corp.	67	67	66.5	66.5	42,300
Union Bank of the Phil.	50	50	49.5	49.5	8,200
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Bankardinc.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	100,000
Citiseconline.Cominc.	5.6	5.6	5.3	5.4	2,007,000
First Abacus Financial	0.63	0.63	0.63	0.63	60,000
Filipino Fundinc.	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.9	2,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	30.5	30.5	30.5	30.5	2,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1620	1625	1620	1625	1,000
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.34	1.4	1.34	1.4	127,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	272.5	275	270	270	5,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2085	2085	2085	2085	770
Ivantage Corp.	1.54	1.54	1.54	1.54	110,000
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
PNOC Energy Dev. Corp.	4.65	4.65	4.4	4.45	108,950,000
First Gen Corp.	53	53	52.5	53	943,500
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	61.5	62.5	61	61.5	2,450,000
Manila Electric Co. A	55	56	54.5	54.5	506,500
Manila Electric Co. B	55	56.5	54.5	55	2,615,400
Manila Water Co. Inc.	10.5	10.5	9.6	9.7	7,053,000
Petron Corp.	4.1	4.15	4.05	4.1	5,179,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.28	0.28	200,000
Salcon Power Corp.	1.78	1.78	1.78	1.78	28,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.18	1.18	1.14	1.14	3,567,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	194,000
CADP Group Corp.	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	19,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	21	21	20.75	20.75	31,700
Jollibee Foods Corp.	41.5	41.5	41	41	577,100
Pancake Houseinc.	6.1	6.1	6.1	6.1	5,000
RFM Corp.	1.04	1.04	1.02	1.02	749,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.5	2.5	2.46	2.48	1,020,000
San Miguel Corp. A	65.5	66.5	65.5	66.5	134,200
San Miguel Corp. B	72	73	71.5	72	569,500
Tanduay Holdingsinc.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	1,000
Alliance Tuna Int'l. Inc.	2.2	2.2	2.04	2.04	1,532,000
Universal Robina Corp.	19.75	19.75	19	19	4,691,200
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	1.14	1.14	1.06	1.06	15,118,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	3.25	3.5	3.25	3.3	2,483,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	42,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	7.8	7.8	7.6	7.7	3,058,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	10,000
Republic Cement Corp.	4	4	4	4	100,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez TechnologiesInc.	5.5	5.5	5.2	5.3	9,656,000
Interphil Labs Inc. B	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	20,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Geograce Res. Phil. Inc.	0.73	0.74	0.69	0.71	25,840,000
Picop Resourcesinc.	0.26	0.28	0.225	0.23	177,280,000
Panasonic Mfg Phil Corp.	7	7	7	7	236,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Asia Amalgamated Holdings	0.46	0.46	0.41	0.41	360,000
Atok-Big Wedge Co. Inc.	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	1,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	86,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	10,000,000
Ayala Corp.	500	500	497.5	500	394,450
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.65	0.65	0.61	0.61	510,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	6.9	6.9	6.8	6.9	826,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.6	1,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.06	0.06	0.0575	0.06	26,100,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.85	2.9	2.85	2.9	1,521,000
APC Groupinc.	0.4	0.4	0.36	0.38	27,030,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	416,200,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1.08	1.16	1.08	1.08	19,446,000
ATN Holdingsinc.	1.88	1.88	1.88	1.88	24,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	1.12	1.12	1.12	1.12	16,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9	9	9	9	66,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	2.26	2.28	2.16	2.22	17,754,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	6.1	6.3	6.1	6.2	2,539,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	3.6	3.85	3.5	3.6	5,490,000
House Of Investments Inc.	1.9	2.1	1.9	1.94	1,078,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	9.8	10	9.7	9.7	3,202,000
Keppel Holdings	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	21,000
Medco Holdings	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	110,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.38	0.38	0.37	0.37	330,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	4.15	4.25	3.9	3.9	212,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	1.62	1.62	1.54	1.58	1,220,000
Pacifica	0.021	0.021	0.02	0.02	29,000,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.21	0.215	0.2	0.2	5,380,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.44	1.44	1.42	1.42	35,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	40,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.165	0.165	0.15	0.15	14,840,000
SM Investments Corp.	302.5	305	300	305	165,720
South China Resources Inc.	1.02	1.04	1.02	1.04	450,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	1.58	1.58	1.54	1.54	313,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co.	0.4	0.41	0.28	0.29	149,390,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.13	0.135	0.13	0.135	4,630,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	15.25	15.25	15	15	20,511,100
Belle Corp.	1.14	1.16	1.08	1.08	17,595,000
A Brown Company Inc.	1.7	1.74	1.66	1.66	412,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.41	0.41	0.41	0.41	3,300,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.2	87,000
C & P Homes Inc.	1.42	1.42	1.42	1.42	4,000
Cebu Prop. Vent B	2	2	2	2	500,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	100,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	310,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.55	0.55	0.53	0.54	5,900,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.065	0.065	0.0625	0.065	7,600,000
Filinvest Landinc.	1.88	2.04	1.88	1.96	27,064,000
Interport Res.	0.01	0.01	0.009	0.009	151,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.01	0.01	0.009	0.009	107,000,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.51	0.51	0.48	0.48	2,880,000
Fil-Estate Landinc.	0.7	0.7	0.68	0.68	440,000
Megaworld Corp.	2.28	2.3	2.24	2.26	86,444,000
Metro Pacific Inv. Corp.	2.24	2.24	2.24	2.24	17,000
MRC Allied Ind Inc.	0.39	0.42	0.37	0.38	8,980,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	15.75	15.75	15.5	15.5	4,196,300
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.7	0.7	0.65	0.66	19,340,000
SM Development Corp.	2.55	2.55	2.5	2.5	842,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	10.25	10.25	10	10	15,068,600
Suntrust Home Dev. Inc.	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	200,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.105	0.105	4,520,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	21	21	21	21	43,500
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	5,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.96	2	1.86	1.92	16,038,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1235	1240	1225	1230	44,840
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	6.5	6.7	6.3	6.4	13,443,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2445	2450	2385	2390	242,510
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.19	0.195	0.18	0.18	14,260,000
Imperial Res.	0.021	0.021	0.018	0.018	16,100,000
Ionics Inc.	2.18	2.18	2.1	2.1	634,000
IPVG Corp.	4.4	4.5	4.1	4.25	1,345,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.0575	0.0575	0.0575	0.0575	100,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.28	1.28	1.2	1.2	340,000
Transpacific Broadband	4.9	4.9	4.05	4.75	3,884,000
Philweb Corp.	0.031	0.031	0.031	0.031	89,200,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	4.2	4.25	4.2	4.2	229,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.24	1.28	1.24	1.28	911,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	19.25	19.25	19.25	19.25	38,200
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.95	0.95	0.94	0.94	90,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.26	1.26	1.26	1.26	1,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	2.16	2.16	2.14	2.14	951,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.35	0.36	0.35	0.35	2,780,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.2	3.25	3.2	3.25	366,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.6	0.6	0.58	0.6	3,000,000
EDUCATION					
Far Eastern University	780	780	780	780	300
iPeople Inc.	3.05	3.1	3.05	3.05	180,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	2.08	2.12	2.06	2.06	543,000
Paxys Inc.	18.75	18.75	18.5	18.75	676,800
Philcomsat Holdings Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	50,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	5.8	5.8	5.6	5.7	2,020,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	5.8	5.8	5.6	5.7	2,143,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	87,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	9.9	10	9.3	9.4	3,944,000
Benguet Corp. A	9.5	9.5	9.3	9.5	79,000
Benguet Corp. B	24.25	24.25	24	24	90,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.26	0.27	0.26	0.26	23,370,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.27	0.28	0.27	0.28	1,170,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.023	0.023	0.021	0.022	230,600,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.026	0.027	0.025	0.025	188,200,000
Omico Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.012	139,200,000
Philex Mining Corp.	4.1	4.1	4	4.1	7,755,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	19	19	18.75	18.75	159,500
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.85	0.85	0.76	0.76	9,150,000
Vulcan Ind'l	1.76	1.8	1.58	1.6	18,262,000
OIL					
Basic Petroleum Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.29	0.29	2,820,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	174,600,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	26,700,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	1.06	1.06	0.99	0.99	1,499,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	1.02	1.04	1.02	1.04	725,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	10.25	10.25	10	10	103,000

CURRENCIES

December 19, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.763184	1.000000	49.3390
Japan	Yen	0.006463	0.008468	0.4178
United Kingdom	Pound	1.486911	1.948300	96.1272
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.098185	0.128652	6.3476
Switzerland	Franc	0.624537	0.818331	40.3756
Canada	Dollar	0.659623	0.864304	42.6439
Singapore	Dollar	0.493076	0.646078	31.8768
Australia	Dollar	0.593964	0.778271	38.3991
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.024468	2.652661	130.8796
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.203511	0.266660	13.1567
Brunei	Dollar	0.491489	0.643998	31.7742
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000084	0.000110	0.0054
Thailand	Baht	0.021265	0.027863	1.3747
UAE	Dirham	0.207799	0.272279	13.4340
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.310300	64.6489
Korea	Won	0.000823	0.001079	0.0532
China	Yuan**	0.097591	0.127874	6.3092
Brazil	Real	0.355946	0.466396	23.0115
Denmark	Kroner	0.134160	0.175790	8.6733
India	Rupee	0.017100	0.022406	1.1055
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.214800	0.281452	13.8866
Mexico	New Peso	0.070583	0.092485	4.5631
New Zealand	Dollar	0.526298	0.689608	34.0246
South Africa	Rand	0.108685	0.142410	7.0264
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023421	0.030689	1.5142



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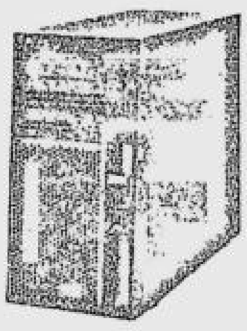

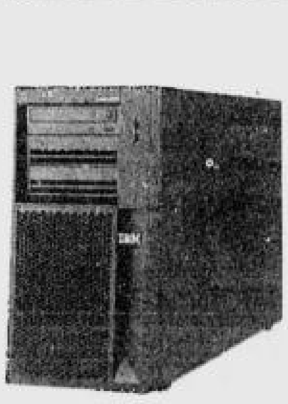

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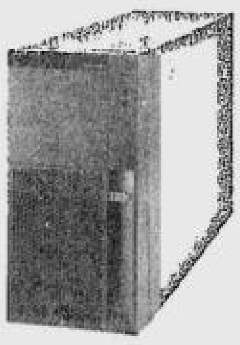

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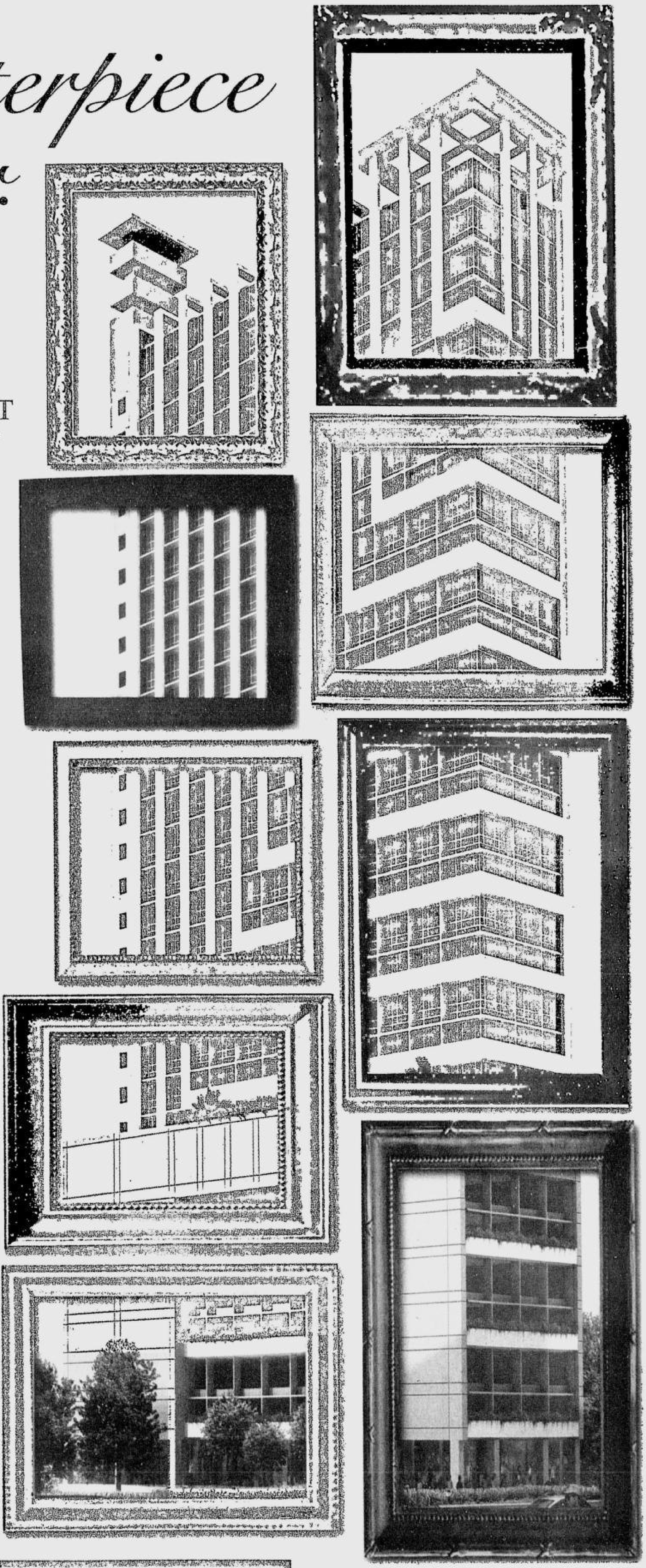

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PSALM eyes sale of 50% of Luzon, Visayas assets

Napocor's geothermal, coal-fired assets next in line

By Abigail L. Ho

THE POWER SECTOR ASSETS AND LIabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) expects to privatize at least 50 percent of National Power Corp.'s Luzon and Visayas capacities by next year, following the successful sale of three hydropower assets with total capacity of 472 megawatts (MW) in recent months.

In an interview with reporters, PSALM president Nieves Osorio said that, including the sale of the 360-MW Magat hydropower plant last week, the government agency had so far privatized about 11 percent of Napocor's Luzon and Visayas capacities.

A "conservative target" for end-2007, she said, was 50 percent.

"We were advised to keep a conservative target. If we do better, then that will be fine. The 50-percent target is achievable if we settle all the issues," she said.

One such issue, she said, involved the steam sales agreement between Napocor and PNOC Energy Development Corp. for the 192.5-MW Palinpinon and 112.5-MW Tongonan geothermal power facilities.

If the steam sales agreement could be ironed out, then PSALM could pursue more aggressively the sale of those assets, she said.

Another issue that had to be worked out, she said, was whether PSALM would sell the two units of the Palinpinon plant separately or in one package.

One unit has a capacity of 112.5 MW, while the other has a capacity of 80 MW.

"(Selling them separately or together) will really depend on the appetite of the buyers," she said.

After selling the 360-MW Magat plant, the biggest hydropower facility in the country, she said PSALM would likely be bidding out Napocor's geothermal and coal-fired assets.

The actual scheduling of the auctions, she said, would depend on how Napocor would allocate its recently signed supply contract with Manila Electric Co. among the plants that would be placed on the auction block.

She said PSALM could sell yet another hydropower asset, but issues, particularly those that had to do with land use, still had to be resolved.

"But bidders are already waiting for the next hydroelectric plant to be bid out," she said.

GOV'T BID FOR CHEAPER DRUGS BACKED
United Laboratories Inc. president Carlos Ejercito (right) talks about his company's commitment to support the government's effort to provide the public with safe and cheaper medicine during the Kapihan sa Sulo forum. He said Unilab "has continually pursued its commitment to pharmaco-economics," which has driven the company to produce lower-priced medicines.

Chinatrust sees 10% profit growth

By Doris C. Dumlao

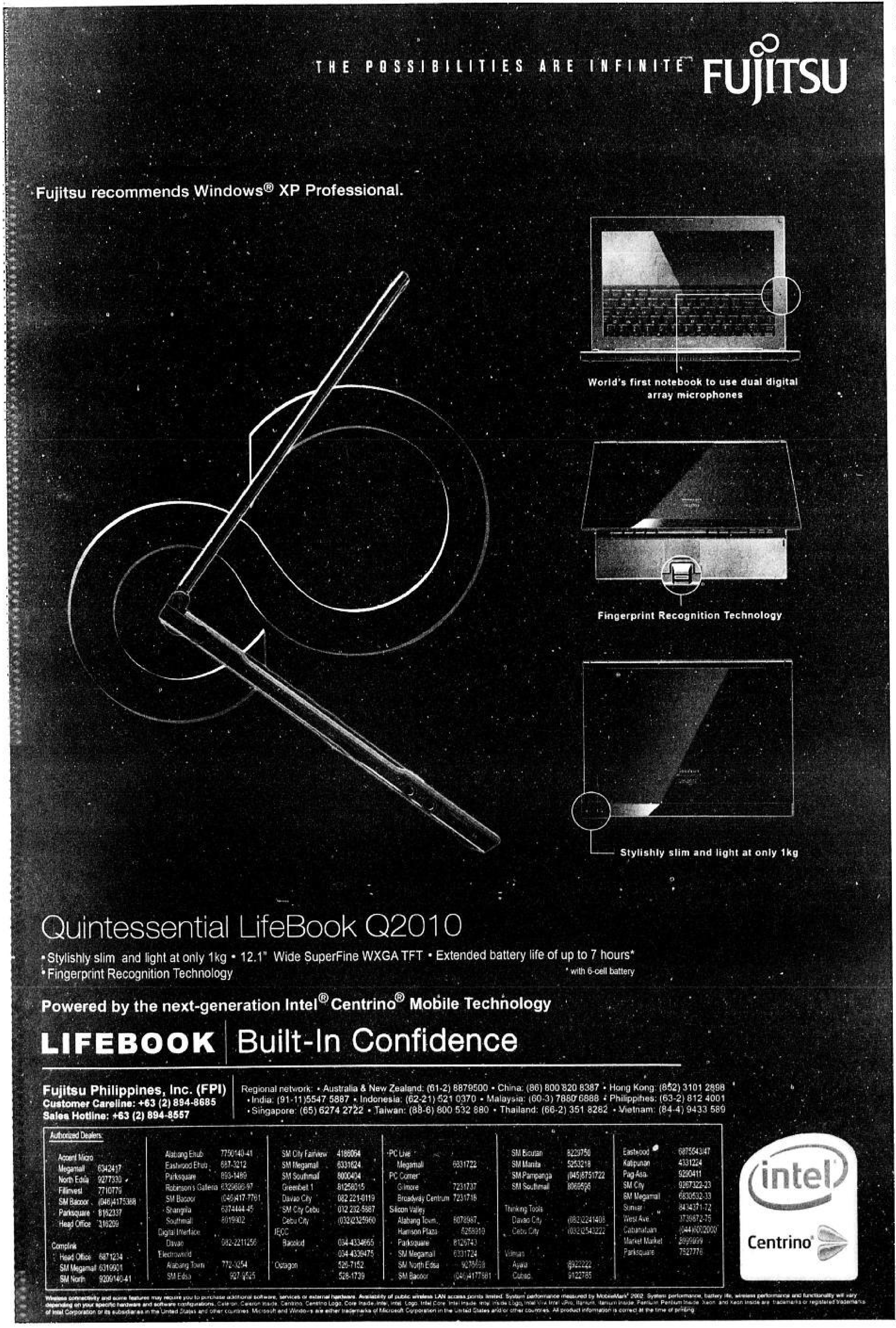
CHINATRUST (PHILIPPINES) COMMercial Bank Corp. expects its net profit this year to rise by at least 10 percent from the P417 million posted in 2005 on the back of strong revenues from treasury and consumer banking activities.

Chinatrust president Joey Bermudez said the bank, a unit of Taiwanese banking giant Chinatrust, was growing steadily, particularly in the personal loan business.

"From a new player in 2005 in the personal loans business, we've now become a leader in this area. In this country of 30 million employed or salaried individuals, I'm surprised that a lot of banks have missed out on this golden opportunity to provide the most basic need of salaried employees," Bermudez said.

"We're now the biggest provider of that product," he added.

He said the bank had likewise grown its branch network, expecting to increase its branches from 20 to 23 by the first quarter of 2007. He said the bank was likewise reaching out to new growth areas.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Scrap hybrid rice subsidy for '07, DA chief urged

FARMERS HAVE ASKED THE DEPARTMENT OF Agriculture to shelve a plan to allocate P2.7 billion for seed subsidy under the government's hybrid rice commercialization program which, they claimed, had benefited only one supplier.

The Northern Luzon-based West Tanat Multipurpose Cooperative (WTMC) expressed fears that the "jacked up subsidy levels for next year may have something to do with next year's electoral exercise." The group, in a statement, warned Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap not to allow the hybrid rice program to suffer the same fate as the fertilizer (program), which became the center of an earlier controversy over an alleged fund scam.

The WTMC quoted a report of the international agency Southeast Asian Regional Institute for Community Empowerment (Searice) which showed substantial increases in subsidies to the rice program's "preferred" supplier during election years.

The Searice report said the budget for the program, which started at P378 million in 2002, has ballooned to P1.2 billion in 2004. It was reduced to P780 million last year and raised again to P1.6 billion this year. Reports indicated that the government was planning to release P2.7 billion in 2007, an election year.

WTMC chair Melany Aquino said the DA "will find it hard to justify the election year subsidy to the preferred supplier of seeds because many program participants have been reported to have dropped out." She earlier urged Yap to look into reports that the use of the seeds bought from the subsidized preferred supplier "were proven to be less profitable compared to the regular variety since farmers have to spend more for inputs and labor."

Mutual funds . . .

From page B2

It also deprives many Filipinos of the ability to earn better returns on their money.

"Most investors are still unaware of mutual funds," he said. "There is a real need to improve the system."

The present system, he said, favors sophisticated investors who are already experts at managing their finances.

In fact, the average investment size of Grepalife clients stands at P1 million despite the law setting the minimum investment amount at only P5,000.

Because the distribution system remains cumbersome, Cruz explained that it becomes increasingly expensive to service clients with smaller investments.

Icap is only all too aware of this problem and is moving democratize the local investments scene.

Sison said the industry is now working with a very supportive Senate to pass the proposed Collective Investment Schemes Law, which will level the playing field between mutual funds and UITFs, as well as put both products under the ambit of a single regulator—a move which the central bank is hesitant to support, given the relatively unsophisticated nature of local investors.

"We really have to educate the market further," Grepalife's Cruz said.

Indeed, according to Fami's Valeroso, most clients of the firm's Save and Learn mutual funds are sophisticated investors who average P1 million per investment, despite the fact that its products are aimed at helping teachers manage their finances better.

"We have not generated momentum yet in our target market," he conceded.

For that to happen—for more Filipinos to benefit from the stock and bond markets—difficult reforms need to be done that will require sacrifices from all stakeholders.

LBP out to get bigger slice of OFW remittances

Gov't bank to kick off campaign in Singapore, Abu Dhabi

By Christine A. Gaylican

LAND BANK OF THE PHILIPPINES WILL EMbark next year on a more aggressive campaign to corner a bigger slice of remittances from overseas Filipino workers in Asia.

Land Bank will convert its representative offices in Asia to remittance centers, starting with Singapore and Abu Dhabi, UAE and then expand to Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei, said Land Bank executive vice president Alfonso B. Cruz in an interview.

He noted that although remittance centers would mean higher maintenance costs for the bank, the cost would be worth it because of the increasing amount of remittances coursed through the banks.

"Aside from our Singapore branch, we will have a test run of our California branch. There would be more technological enhancements to be put in place," he added.

He said Land Bank would also extend remittance services in Europe, starting in Italy.

Cruz added that Land Bank was in talks with remittance service providers based in Hong Kong, Japan and Taiwan to-jumpstart the campaign.

Meanwhile, Land Bank loans to its priority sectors—agriculture and agribusiness projects, micro-enterprises and LGU projects—reached P79.6 billion in the last nine months, bank officials yesterday reported.

Land Bank has allocated 70 percent of its total loan portfolio worth P114 billion for its priority sectors from January to September, bank president and CEO Gilda E. Pico said in a press briefing yesterday, surpassing its 65 percent allocation target for the year.

"The continued expansion of Land Bank's loan portfolio in favor of our priority sectors is proof of our commitment to our mandate of spurring growth in the rural economy, supporting agricultural production and generating jobs in the countryside," Pico noted.

She said that Land Bank lent some P11.1 billion for agriculture-related projects of government-owned and -controlled corporations, up by P1.2 billion from the same period last year.

Land Bank also funded agriculture infrastructure projects of local government units worth P13.5 billion, P604 million more than the loans it approved last year.

An announcement to
Philippine AXA Life Insurance Corporation
customers, stakeholders and business partners

We at Philippine AXA Life Insurance Corporation are pleased to announce that PLDT has restored most of our telephone facilities in our Head Office operations. The Company remains committed to providing continuous service to our customers. We would like to express our gratitude to our customers and various stakeholder groups for their patience and understanding regarding the matter.

Thank you very much.

You may contact our head office at (02) 885-0101.

AXA LIFE INSURANCE & INVESTMENTS
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DOE, Winrock budget P7.5M for hydro projects

By Abigail L. Ho

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY HAS FORGED an agreement with Winrock International to earmark P7.5 million for the electrification of four barangays in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) using micro-hydropower technology.

The funding for the project will come from the DOE, in partnership with the Philippine Rural Power Project, which the World Bank funds through the Global Environment Facility.

Winrock, for its part, through the Alliance for Mindanao Off-Grid Renewable Energy (Amore) Program, will shoulder the cost of 12 months of social preparation, as well as 25 percent of the procurement, engineering and construction costs of the micro-hydro systems.

"ARMM is the least electrified region in the country and home to the poorest and most conflict-stricken areas in the country. These areas are in most need of electricity to fuel economic growth and we appreciate Winrock's participation in this undertaking," Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said in a statement yesterday.

Winrock is currently implementing the Amore Program, which aims to promote peace and progress in the ARMM areas.

To date, the program has brought power to 227 barangays using photovoltaic (PV) systems.

Under the second phase of the Amore undertaking, at least 20 micro-hydro systems will be installed for the electrification of unviable barangays in the ARMM.

Lotilla said it was becoming more and more difficult for the government to provide power to all of the country's 41,945 barangays due to the state's budgetary constraints.

As of November, the country's barangay electrification level stood at 94.58 percent, with 2,274 barangays still without power.

The government aims to provide electricity to all barangays in the country by 2008.

Shares . . .

From page B1

Market breadth was negative with 92 losers and 42 gainers, while 41 stocks were unchanged. Volume was 2.7 billion shares worth P4.27 billion.

"We saw a slowdown as there was no strong buying appetite, especially since the Christmas holidays are just a few days away," said Lawrence de Leon of Accord Capital Equities Inc.

"Investors were also hesitant to buy stocks because they did not see any major news that could really kick up a rally," he said. *AFP*

Regional . . .

From page B1

currency crisis—earlier than one year would be refunded only two-thirds of the amount.

Stock broker Joseph Roxas of Eagle Equities Inc. said even the equities market turned jittery following Thailand's move.

"The market really needed an assurance from the BSP that it won't do the same," Roxas said.

After hitting a new four-and-a-half year high of 49.31 to $1 on Monday, the peso yesterday opened near the day's high of 49.37 and closed near the low of 49.78. Volume turnover was heavy at $668.50 million.

Banco de Oro Universal Bank chief strategist Jonathan Ravelas said the steep fall was a knee-jerk reaction to the capital control in Thailand. He said the near-term (US dollar) resistance was at P49.85.

Other currencies in the region also succumbed to massive sell-off over jitters on the Thai central bank's announcement.

But the BSP is even contemplating a further liberalization of its foreign exchange policies to allow banks to buy more dollars given the strong influx of foreign exchange not just from foreign portfolio investments but also from overseas Filipino workers' remittances.

During its weekly meeting on Thursday, the BSP's policy-making Monetary Board is set to discuss possible measures to ease the limit on banks' capacity to stockpile dollars or the overbought limit.

For the first time since the Asian currency crisis, the BSP is considering to jack up banks' allowable dollar purchases to at least $10 million from the current cap of $5 million. Another option on the table is the Bankers Association of the Philippines' proposal to do away with the nominal threshold and use capital adequacy ratio (CAR) as the main criterion in setting the limits, giving more leeway to banks with better balance sheets.

Prior to the 1997 Asian currency turmoil, the allowable overbought position was as high as 20 percent of a bank's unimpaired capital and the oversold limit 10 percent of unimpaired capital. There was no nominal limit in US dollar terms.

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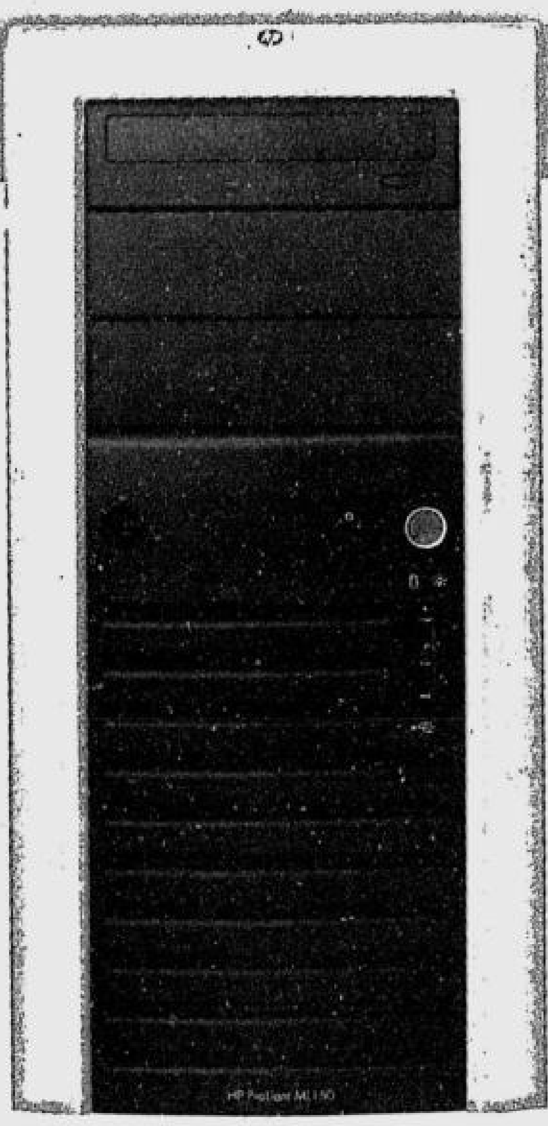

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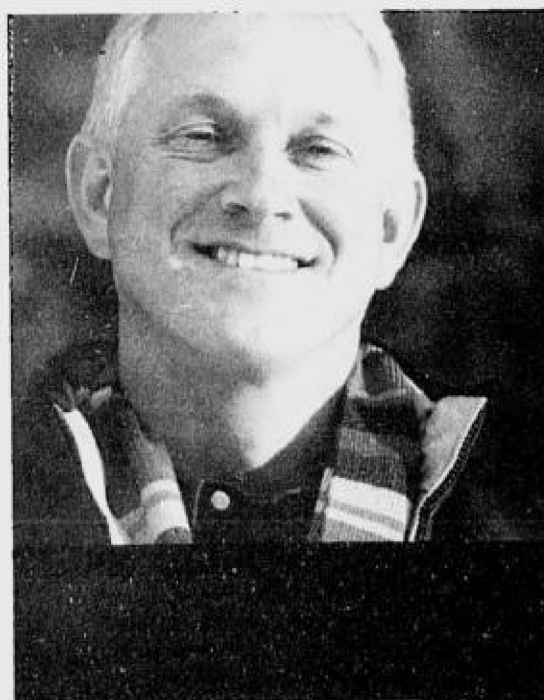

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Republic of the Philippines
ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT
Pilar Street, Zamboanga City

SECTION I. INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Zamboanga City Water District, through its Bids and Awards Committee I (BAC I), invites Suppliers/ Manufacturers to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

PR NO.	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT (ABC)	COST OF BID DOCUMENTS	DATE OF ISSUANCE OF BID DOCUMENTS	DATE OF PRE-BID CONFERENCE	DATE OF SUBMISSION/ OPENING OF BIDS
9380	Rice – Best Quality for the Month of January 2007	P 513,000.00	P 500.00	December 13 to 21, 2006	December 21, 2006	January 4, 2007

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules & Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act, and is restricted to organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, as specified in Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process of the Eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with lowest calculated bid (LCB) shall be advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine its responsiveness to the technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall be then awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT and inspect the Bidding documents at the address given below during office hours (8:00 – 5:00pm)

All Bids must be accompanied by a ***Bid Security in the form of Cash, Certified Check, Cashier's and Manager's Check in the amount of One Percent (1%) of the Approved Budget Cost.*** Late Bids shall not be accepted.

Bid Opening shall be at the 2nd Floor, ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT Main Office Building, Pilar St., Zamboanga City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidder's representative's who choose to attend at the address below.

The ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time or prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT
Mr. Noel M. Kawaguchi
Pilar St., Zamboanga City 7000
Telephone No. (062) 991-1556
Email:
Fax: (062) 991-2799

(Sgd.) **ARNULFO A. ALFONSO**
BAC I Chairman

(PDI- Dec. 20, 2006)

VICTORIAS
MILLING COMPANY, INC.

INVITATION TO PRE-QUALIFY AND TO BID

VICTORIAS MILLING COMPANY, INC., Victorias City, Negros Occidental wishes to invite interested agencies/bidders to pre-qualify and to bid for VMC's Security Services for one (1) year.

Interested bidders must submit the following pre-qualification requirements:

- Letter of intent with Interest to Bid
- VMC Accreditation papers for those who are not yet accredited
- PADPAO Membership
- License from PNP, SOSIA
- Certificate of Registration and must be in good standing with SEC or DTI
- Certificate of Registration with BIR
- Certificate of Membership with SSS, Philhealth, HDMF, Pag-ibig, etc.
- Certificate from Department of Labor and Employment
- List of equipment with updated licenses of firearms, handheld radios, etc.
- Has a good track record and satisfactory performance as attested to by at least three (3) clients
- Latest audited Financial Statements stamped by BIR and certified by a Certified Public Accountant

Bidding kits are available at the MCD Office and at Makati Office on **December 19, 2006 to January 12, 2007**, after payment of a non-refundable fee of P500.00. Kindly submit the needed requirements on or before **January 12, 2007** to qualify to bid. The pre-bidding conference will be held on **January 16, 2007**, at the VMC HRD Training Center at **2:30 P.M.** The commercial bidding will be announced thereafter.

For further inquiries, please contact **Messrs. Carlos S. Quiatchon or Dan C. Labrador** at VMC Millsite at telephone numbers **(034) 399-3696 to 97** and (local) **2351 or 2309**, and **Mr. Ernesto "Toto" Oligo** at VMC Makati Office at telephone numbers **(02) 899-0485** and **(02) 890-7061**. Also visit our website www.victoriasmilling.com and e-mail us at mcd@victoriasmilling.com.

Victorias Milling Company, Inc., reserves the right to reject any or all bids without offering any reason, to waive any required formality therein, and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the Company. The Company assumes no obligation to compensate or indemnify the bidder/s for any expense/s or loss that they may incur in the preparation of the bids, nor does it guarantee that an award will be made.

(Sgd.) **TERESITA V. ILAGAN**
Chairperson, Senior Bidding Committee

(PDI - Dec. 20, 2006)

ILOCOS NORTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
Suyo, Dingras, Ilocos Norte, PHILIPPINES 2913
Tel. No. (077) 784-75-46 & 47; 784-71-26 & Fax No. (077) 784-71-25

INVITATION FOR PRE-QUALIFICATION AND FOR BIDS

The Ilocos Norte Electric Cooperative, Inc. has applied for a loan from the Development Bank of the Philippines to finance the construction of its 69 KV power line and invites electrical contractors who are PCAB registered to supply for pre-qualification and to submit bids for the said project.

The project includes the furnishing of labor and materials for the construction of about 37 Kilometers of 69 KV line in the Province of Ilocos Norte.

Interested contractors and suppliers may obtain their pre-qualification forms and bid documents from the INEC main office starting January 09, 2007.

Pre-qualification documents must be received by this office not later than January 23, 2007. Only those pre-qualified shall be invited to bid for the project.

INEC reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any defect or informality, assume no obligation whatsoever of indemnity to the bidders any expense or loss that the bidder may incur in the preparations of its bid and to accept the bid most advantageous to INEC.

(Sgd.) **ROMILLAS C. PASCUAL**
General Manager

(PDI–Dec. 18, 19 & 20, 2006)

MAYNILAD WATER SERVICES, INC.
2/F MWSI Bldg. MWSS Complex
Katipunan Road, Balara, Quezon City, Philippines 1100
Tel. Nos. 927-36-27. 435-42-31

NOTICE OF LOST RECEIPT

Maynilad Water Services Inc. is advising its customers that Provisional Receipt Number **3308054** under booklet 3308001-3308100 assigned to NICK ALLAN ISCALA, authorized AMI collector of North Caloocan Business Center, was declared lost.

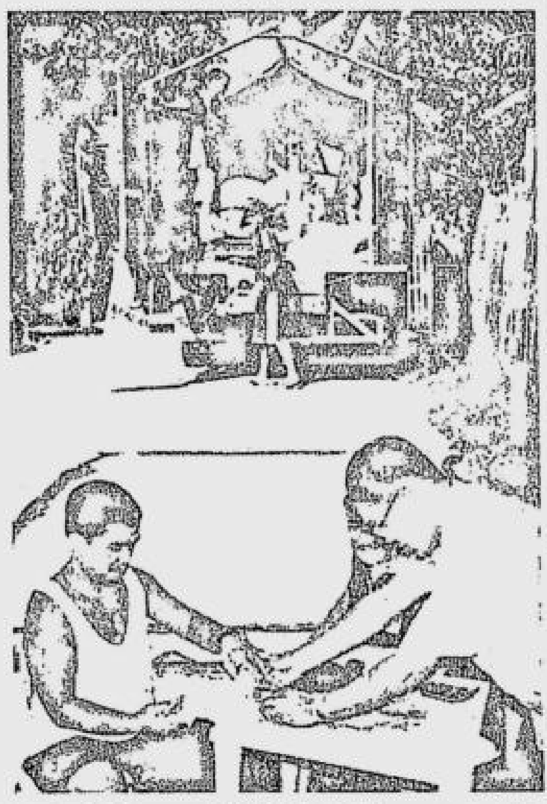
In view of the above, the public is warned that Maynilad Water will not honor any transaction involving **O.R. No. 3308054.**

Maynilad is urging its customers to report any information concerning the missing receipt to Maynilad's North Caloocan Business Center at tel. no. 417-0214, or they may call Maynilad Hotline **1626** or **4362000.**

(PDI - Dec. 20, 2006)

MOBILE PALAY BUYING IN AKLAN

The National Food Authority in Aklan fields mobile buying teams to optimize its services to farmers by buying their palay produce. Two mobile buying teams cover the palay-producing towns of Lezo, Numancia, Makato, Ibajay, Ibao, Balete, Altavas and Malinao. With each team buying an average of 250-350 bags of palay per day, daily procurement in Aklan has reached 464 bags, the highest in Region VI. Paying in cash, the team buys from farmers with NFA passbooks. Farmers without passbooks, meanwhile, are allowed to sell maximum of 50 cavans in a one-time transaction. The agency encourages farmers nationwide to apply for a passbook to increase the volume of palay they could sell to the agency and avail of other benefits the NFA offers including the use of its post harvest facilities to improve the quality of their produce.



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NOVENA TO THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS

May the most Sacred Heart of Jesus be praised, blessed, loved, adored and glorified throughout the whole world now and forever. Amen.

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Pray for us.

Say nine times a day for nine days. Prayer will be answered by the eighth day, it has never failed

PRAYER TO HOLY SPIRIT

Holy Spirit thou who make me see everything and show me the way to reach my ideal. You who give me the divine gift to forgive and forget the wrong that is done to me and who are in all instances of my life with me I. In this short dialogue, want to thank You for everything and confirm once more that I never want to be separated from You, no matter how great the material desires may be. I want to be with You and my loved ones in Your Perpetual Glory. Amen.

Person must say this 3 consecutive days without stating one's wish. After 3rd day. Your wish will be granted no matter how difficult it may be.

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OBITUARIES

Lourdes Rubin de Alvarez

Fallecio en la gracia de Nuestro Señor
el 19 de deciembre de 2006 a los 84 años

Sus hijos, **Juan Bautista** (†), **Sonny** y **Milette**, **Nena** y **Bill**, **Lottie** y **Boyen**, **Inez** y **Tito**, **Lyn** y **Jimbo**,**Dingdong** y **Eddie**; nietos **Trixie**, **Piccina**, **Jacqui**, **Lyndee** y **Carlo**, **Kathy**, **Pia** y **Q**, **Mari**, **Joey**, **Mico**, **Louie**, **Bea** (†), **Carlo**, **Anna**, **Gabby**, **Vino**, **Monica**, **Nicole**, **Maia**, **Celine**; bisnietos **Santino**, **Natalia**, **Jacob**, **Chabeli**; hermana **Rosa R. de Zubiri**, cuñados, sobrinos, parientes y amigos ruegan oraciones para el eterno descanso de su alma.

Se celebrara una misa a las 6:00 de la mañana el miercoles, 20 de deciembre, en la capilla de la Funeraria Paz, Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque, tras la cual procedera a la cremacion.

Tambien se celebraran misas diariamente en la capilla de la Paroquia de San Martin de Porres, United Hills Village, Parañaque hasta el sabado, 23 de deciembre a las 10:00 de la mañana, tras la cual se procedera el entierro en su cripta en el Sanctuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park, Makati.

Aniceta Melo-Felipe

April 17, 1923 - December 18, 2006

She is survived by her husband **Manuel,** children **James, Caroline** and **Sharon,** daughter-in-law **Malu,** granddaughter **Emily,** brothers **Romulo** and **Celedonio,** nieces, nephews, and grandchildren. She was preceded in death by siblings **Julian, Teodulo, Ponciano, Juana** and **Nicasia.**

Her remains lie in state at the Sapinoso Grand Chapel, Col. J. Elises Street, Imus, Cavite.

Interment will be on December 21, 2006 at the Melda Memorial Park, Toclong 1, Imus, Cavite after the 2 p.m. memorial service at the Imus Unida Church.

FR. JUAN R. SANZ, S.J.

was called home to the Lord on Monday, 18 December 2006.

Wake : Oratory of St. Ignatius at Loyola House of Studies, Ateneo de Manila University Campus, Loyola Heights, Q.C. Daily Mass at 8:00 p.m.

Funeral Mass : at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, 21st December in the Oratory of St. Ignatius, Loyola House of Studies.

Interment : Sacred Heart Novitiate Cemetery, Novaliches, Q.C. immediately after the Funeral Mass.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE REPOSE OF HIS SOUL.

Death Notice

IRENEA P. AGUSTIN
April 5, 1940 -
December 18, 2006
Banadero, Ozamis City

Her remains lie in state at family residence, Banadero, Ozamis City, Misamis Occidental.

Interment will be announced later.

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NOTICE OF TENDER OFFER TO THE STOCKHOLDERS OF VISAYAN ELECTRIC COMPANY, INC. (VECO)

To All Stockholders of VISAYAN ELECTRIC COMPANY, INC. ("VECO"):

Please be informed that on December 15, 2006, VECO filed a Tender Offer Statement (SEC Form 19-1) with the Securities and Exchange Commission (the "SEC") pursuant to Section 19 of the Securities Regulation Code in connection with its intention to acquire, at the price of Php 500.00 per share, 400,000 common shares of stock of VECO owned by stockholders constituting approximately 5.23% of the outstanding capital stock of VECO with par value of Php 200.00 per share. The consideration is payable in check not later than ten (10) business days after the termination of the tender offer ("Payment Date"), provided, however, that if any payment of the consideration is due on a day which is not a Business Day, such payment shall be due on the next succeeding Business Day. For this purpose, "Business Day" shall mean any day excluding (i) Saturday, (ii) Sunday and (iii) any day on which commercial banks in Cebu City, Philippines are authorized or required by law or other government action to close, or (iv) any legal holiday.

Stockholders as of November 30, 2006 (the "Record Date") may tender all or a portion of their VECO common shares for acceptance and purchase by VECO, subject to the Terms of the Tender Offer, beginning at 9:00 a.m. of December 19, 2006 until 3:00 p.m. of January 22, 2007 (the "Tender Offer Period").

Tendering stockholders of VECO who hold stock certificates should submit within the Tender Offer Period their duly endorsed stock certificates and two (2) copies of duly accomplished Application to Sell Shares, together with the following requirements to Tender Offer Staff at VECO Complex, J. Panis Street, Banilad, Cebu City with telephone no. (32)230-8326 (Contact Person: Ms. Jessel Travero):

For corporate stockholders:

1. Certified copies of the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws of the stockholder and latest amendment/s thereof.
2. A notarized Secretary's Certificate setting forth resolutions of the tendering stockholder's Board of Directors authorizing the tender and sale of VECO shares and designating the signatories for the purpose.
3. A duly accomplished signature card containing the specimen signatures of its authorized signatories validated by its Corporate Secretary and verified by an officer of the bank where it is maintaining an account.

For individual stockholders:

1. Two (2) valid identification cards containing the specimen signature of the stockholder.
2. For stockholders acting through an attorney-in-fact, a duly notarized Special Power of Attorney. (N.B.: Endorsement of stock certificate/s must be made by the stockholder himself).

The Tender Offer Staff will submit the stock certificates for validation to the Office of the Corporate Secretary of VECO, c/o Atty. M. Jasmine S. Oporto, Aboitiz Corporate Center, Gov. M. Cuenco Avenue, Kasambagan, Cebu City, with telephone number (32) 231-2580. Defective applications (such as but not limited to those where there is a discrepancy between the specimen signatures on file and the endorsement) must be corrected within the tender offer period to avoid rejection. Hence, stockholders are strongly urged to tender their shares at the earliest possible time to ensure that any defect in the Application to Sell Shares may still be corrected. Stockholders are also urged to provide or indicate their telephone or contact numbers in their respective application forms to allow the Tender Offer Staff and Office of the Corporate Secretary to inform them immediately of any deficiency in their applications.

Tendering stockholders shall have the right to withdraw any tendered VECO common shares at any time during the Tender Offer Period or, if the tendered VECO shares have not been accepted for payment, up to sixty (60) days from commencement of the Tender Offer Period. For a withdrawal to be effective, a written notice of withdrawal must be timely received by the Tender Offer Staff at their addresses set forth above. The notice must specify the name of the tendering stockholder, the number of VECO shares to be withdrawn and the stock certificate numbers of the stocks covered by the withdrawal. The Tender Offer Staff or Corporate Secretary shall have the right in its sole discretion, to determine the sufficiency of the notice of withdrawal and the timeliness thereof.

The Tender Offer is further subject to the terms and conditions described in the Terms of the Tender Offer. Copies of the SEC Form 19-1 and the tender offer application kit may be obtained by VECO stockholders from the Tender Offer Staff.

This Notice is published in compliance with Section 19 of the Securities Regulation Code. Copies of this Notice, along with the Application to Sell Shares and the attachments shall be sent to the stockholders by post and/or private courier.

The external auditor of VECO, C. L. Manabat & Co., has confirmed that resources are available to satisfy full acceptance of the shares to be offered.

NOTE: YOU MAY CONSULT YOUR LEGAL AND/OR FINANCIAL ADVISER OR DIRECT INQUIRIES OR REQUESTS FOR CLARIFICATION TO THE TENDER OFFER STAFF OR THE OFFICE OF THE CORPORATE SECRETARY.

VISAYAN ELECTRIC COMPANY, INC.

By:

(Sgd.) **DENNIS N. A. GARCIA**
President

(PDI – December 19, 20 & 21, 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
PROVINCE OF BUKIDNON
Provincial Capitol Malaybalay City
Tel. # 088-221-4820 & Telefax # 088-221-2537
E-mail Add: buk_provl_bac@yahoo.com.ph

OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR
Bids and Awards Committee

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Provincial Government of Bukidnon, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites suppliers / manufacturers / distributors / contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid the hereunder projects:

NAME OF THE PROJECTS : Project I – Drugs and Medicines
Project II – Medical, Laboratory, Supplies and Reagents
LOCATION : Provincial General Services Office
BRIEF DESCRIPTION : For the use of seven (7) Provincial Hospitals and Twenty Two (22) Provincial Health Stations, for the first semester of CY 2007.
Approved Budget for the Contract : Project I – P35,145,204.12
Project II – P13,689,665.49
DELIVERY PERIOD : 15 calendar days upon receipt of Notice to Proceed
PLACE OF DELIVERY : Provincial General Services Office, Capitol Compound, Malaybalay City

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking similar project within the last 2 years. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

Activities		Schedule
1.	Advertisement	December 20 & 27, 2006
2.	Issuance of Bid Documents	December 27, 2006
3.	Pre-bid Conference	December 22, 2006
4.	Application for Eligibility	January 03, 2007
5.	Opening of Bids	January 09, 2007 at 10:00 A.M.
6.	Deadline for submission of Bid Documents	January 09, 2007 at 9:00 A.M.

Bid documents will be available only to Prospective Bidders upon payment of non-refundable amount of P5,000.00 for Project I and P2,000.00 for Project II, at the Provincial Treasurer's Office.

Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered at the BAC office, Capitol Compound Malaybalay City. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security equal to 1% for Cash, Certified check, Cashier's check, Manager's check, Bank draft or Irrevocable letter of credit; 1.5% for Bank guarantee; 2.5% for Surety bond of the **Approved Budget for theContract** as advertised. Late Bids shall not be accepted.

The Province of Bukidnon reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Contact Person: Ma. Joe-an P. Bayona
Tel. # – 088-221-2537/2548
Cel # – 09173491624

Approved

(Sgd.) **JOSEFREDIE F. FLORES**
Prov'l Admin/BAC Chairman

(PDI –December 20 & 27, 2006)

TTE '07 slated at SM megamall

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOUR dream vacation choices on Feb. 9, 10, and 11 2007, as the 14th Travel Tour Expo (TTE), the largest trade and consumer event of the travel industry, opens at the Megatrade Halls of SM Megamall in Mandaluyong City. With the theme 14th Travel Tour Expo: Gateway to Your Dream Vacation, TTE '07 is a venue for exhibitors and sponsors providing information and great discounts on tickets, cruises, and tour packages to various domestic and foreign destinations. Product presentations, daily raffle draws, entertainment, games, and surprises await TTE visitors.

The Department of Tourism is the co-presenter of Travel Tour Expo 2007 while the Philippine Air Lines (PAL) is the official carrier as well being a sponsor and exhibitor in the event. Globe Telecom and Globe Broadband are Silver Sponsors and Galileo by Travelport, SM Megatrade Halls and the Israeli Embassy are Bronze sponsors. Air Philippines is an official airline sponsor.

Media partners of TTE '07 include Air Sea Guide, the Business Mirror, the Foreign Post, Travel Update. INQ7.net is the official on line media partner and the Philippine Daily Inquirer is the official broadsheet media partner.

TTE '07 brings together local and international travel agencies, tour operators, airline and cruise liners, hotels, resorts, theme parks, travel product suppliers, and tourism promotion organizations in an event that is the ultimate one-stop shop for travelers looking for the dream getaway. Over 60,000 visitors attended this TTE '06 which generated sales of over PHP 200 Million to both exhibitors and event sponsors – an exciting opportunity for companies to tap the Pinoy traveler on the look out for the best vacation and travel deals. To date, TTE '07 is 70% booked with other travel agencies, airlines, cruise liners, hotels, resorts, national tourism organizations and allied travel service providers lining up to join.

For inquiries, contact the PTAA at 5520026-29 or the event manager Fairs & More at 759 6680, email traveltour@fairsandmore.com.ph, or log on to www.ptaatraveltourexpo.com.ph.

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
National Capital Region
DY Int'l Bldg., 1650 San Marcelino
cor. General Malvar St., Malate, Manila

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/s:

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National	Position
HEADLINE INFORMATION & ELECTRONICS TRADING CORP. Unit 307 SRI Bldg., 2444 F.B. Harrison St., Pasay City	Byung Yoon Lee	President
GOD'S RESOURCES TRADING CORPORATION #952 Rizal Avenue, Sta. Cruz, Manila	Yezhong Xue	Project Manager
BEYOND TRADING & SHOPPERS PHILS. CORP. N1 The Bluewave, D. Macapagal Ave., Pasay City	Sungtae Kang	Operations Manager
MANHATTAN GARMENTS INDUSTRIES CORPORATION Km. 23, West Service Road Warehouse 3-B, Sunblest Compound, Bo. Cupang, Muntinlupa City	Deepak Kumar	Sales Manager
BILKISH LOANS & CREDITS OUTSOURCE SERVICES Unit 317 Gateway Centre, Paseo de Magallanes, Makati City	Sheba Mohsin Merchant	Regional Manager
MIZUHO CORPORATE BANK LTD.-MANILA BRANCH 26/F Citibank Tower, Villar cor. Valero Sts., Salcedo Village Makati City	Shigeo Saito	Joint General Manager
SOODA COMMUNICATION LEARNING CTR. INC. 1630 Luis Ma. Guerrero St. Malate, Manila	Tong Hoon Kim	General Manager
NOKIA (PHILIPPINES), INC. 20/F Philamlife Tower Paseo de Roxas, Makati City	William Georges Hamilton Whyte	General Manager
MAKATI SHANGRI-LA MANILA Corner Ayala and Makati Avenues, Makati City	Randy Tecson Guintivano	Reservations Agent
WANGFANGYU ENTERPRISES, INCORPORATED Rm. 909, Federal Tower, Dasmariñas St., Binondo, Manila	Lalit Lalwani	Technical Operation Manager
MAKATI SHANGRI-LA MANILA Ayala Ave. cor. Makati Ave. Makati City	Siju Jacob Alex	F & B Manager
WATSONS PERSONAL CARE STORES (PHILIPPINES) INC. SM Business Park, 1000 Bay Boulevard, Pasay City	Krishnamurthy Narayanan Iyer	Director and President

If you have any information/objection to the abovementioned application/s please communicate with the Regional Director.

LOURDES M. TRASMONTE
Regional Director

(PDI–Dec. 20, 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Health
ADELA SERRA TY MEMORIAL MEDICAL CENTER
Capitol Hills, Tandag, Surigao del Sur
Telefax No. (086) 211-3700

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

2nd Women's Health and Safe Motherhood Project
(2WHSMP)
Loan No. 7290-PH

Construction of Annex Building of Adela Serra Ty Memorial Medical Center – Phase II

1. The Government of the Philippines (GOP) has applied for a Loan from the World Bank toward the cost of 2nd Women's Health and Safe Motherhood Project (2WHSMP) and intends to apply part of the proceeds of this loan, together with the GOP counterpart funds to payments under the contract for the Construction of Annex Building of Adela Serra Ty Memorial Medical Center – Phase II.
2. The Adela Serra Ty Memorial Medical Center Hospital Bids and Awards Committee (HBAC) now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for the above-mentioned project. Completion of work is required by 270 calendar days.
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act No. 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act. Subject to exceptions stated in this Bidding Documents, only Bids from Bidders who pass an eligibility check will be opened. The Bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine its responsiveness to the technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during post-qualification. The estimated project cost is *Thirty Two Million Two Hundred Thousand Pesos Only (Php32,200,000.00)*.
4. The documents required in the Eligibility Documents shall be submitted as part of the Technical Documents of the Bidders as provided in the Instructions to Bidders.
5. Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from Adela Serra Ty Memorial Medical Center HBAC and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from **8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on January 6-15, 2007.**
6. A compete set of Bidding Documents in English may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of Ten Thousand Pesos only (Php10,000.00). The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the bidder or his authorized representative on **January 15-February 15, 2007.**

   Hospital Bids and Awards Committee
   Attention: Secretariat
   Adela Serra Ty Memorial Medical Center
   Tandag, Surigao del Sur
   Tel. No. 082-2114306
   Fax No. 082-2113700
7. The Adela Serra Ty Memorial Medical Center HBAC will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all Eligible Bidders on **10:00 a.m., February 21, 2007** at the following address **Adela Serra Ty Memorial Medical Center Conference Room, Tandag, Surigao del Sur.**
8. Eligible Bidders must submit their Bids at the address below on or before **10:00 a.m., March 7, 2007.** All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in either of the herein prescribed forms and minimal amounts in percentage based on the ABC or an equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency. Late Bids shall not be accepted.

Form of Bid Security	Minimum Amount in % of the Approved Budget for the Contract
Cash, certified check, cashier's check, manager's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit	Php322,000.00
Bank guarantee	Php483,000.00

Bid opening shall be at **10:01 a.m., March 7, 2007 at the Adela Serra Ty Memorial Medical Center Conference Room, Tandag, Surigao del Sur.** Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend.

9. Completion of the Works is required by **March 16, 2008.**
10. The Adela Serra Ty Memorial Medical Center HBAC reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

ANTONITA L. OROZCO, MD.
HBAC Chairman

(PDI–Dec. 20, 2006)

MOTORING

E-mail: pr_motoring@inquirer.com.ph

Editor **Cesar D. Mangawang**

THE HONDA Civic's lighter and more aerodynamic body keeps the wind at bay and helps the engine consume less fuel

For now, the goal is to achieve better mileage

By Charles E. Buban

OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS, THE promise of hydrogen-powered vehicles dominating our transport landscape has remained unrealized while the problems it was supposed to solve have remained unanswered.

Fuel prices continue to rise. The situation in the Middle East—the world's chief source of oil—has remained volatile.

The stability of this region is essential, considering the world demand for oil is set to increase 37 percent by 2030, according to the US-based Energy Information Administration's annual report.

Even groups skeptic on the issue of climate change are starting to admit that the carbon dioxide emissions cars, trucks and power stations expel into the atmosphere might have disastrous consequences to our environment.

The eight-generation Honda Civic is one of the company's success stories

Potential source

In the search for a nonpolluting energy source, hydrogen is often cited as a potential source of unlimited clean power.

But while automakers are experimenting with vehicles equipped with hydrogen fuel cells that would someday replace internal-combustion engines altogether, engineers are yet to find a way to make these fuel cells efficient enough to drive long distances, and cheap enough to be affordable (these types of vehicle cost $1 million apiece, which is around P49 million).

Indeed, no one will buy a hydrogen-powered car unless there are hydrogen-refilling stations and no one will produce vehicles powered by a hydrogen fuel cell unless there are buyers. In the same way, no one will build distribution and storage systems for hydrogen fuel if there are no customers.

So while the world is still waiting for a breakthrough, automakers at the moment are responding by coming up with new generation vehicles that consume less fuel, emit much cleaner emissions while achieving better mileage.

Fuel efficient

One example is Japanese automaker Honda, which is developing innovative and exciting alternative means of future transport (like Honda's FCX fuel cell vehicle). It is also into developing fully functional hybrid vehicles like the Civic Hybrid that achieves ultra-high fuel economy of 28.5 km/liter to 31 km/liter) as well as gasoline-fed vehicle models that are more fuel-efficient, reliable, safe to drive and perhaps more important, not too expensive to mass-produce.

The eight-generation Honda Civic is one of the company's success stories. With its redesigned, restyled and rejuvenated package, the mid-size sedan offers a more powerful engine that is also fuel-efficient (Honda says the new car achieves fuel economy of around 17 km/liter).

For example the 140 horsepower engine powering the Civic's 1.8-liter variant delivers acceleration on par with a 2.0-liter engine but with a fuel economy equivalent to that of a 1.6-liter engine.

Last week, Honda Cars Philippines Inc. organized a fuel-efficiency driving competition to prove this claim. The Totally Amazing i-VTEC Fuel Eco competition invited owners and members of the motoring media who drove the new 1.8 automatic version of the Civic under normal, day-to-day driving condition (following traffic rules, car's air-conditioning system open and with spare tire and other standard accessories intact).

The first leg of the competition saw its winners, the pair of Federico Villena and Rommel Tobias (customer category), finishing the 34.1-km distance using only 4.05 liters of gasoline (8.411 km/liter consumption) and the pair of Ronald delos Reyes and Ravien Bracero (media category) finishing the 34.4-km distance using only 8.136 liters of gasoline (8.136 km/liter consumption).

French oil giant Total supplied the fuel.

HCPI informed that the event is aimed at continuing the company's fuel economy awareness campaign specially now that fuel prices fluctuate, helping motorists find more practical ways to cut their driving expenses, and proving that today's automakers are doing their best to come up with new vehicles that achieve better mileage.

HONDA says the 1.8-liter variant of its latest Civic delivers acceleration on par with a 2.0-liter engine but with a fuel economy equivalent to that of a 1.6-liter engine

7 ways to log more km

FROM SAVING TO LOWERING THE COST of routine maintenance, these few simple habits would help keep one's fuel costs in check.

1 Choosing a four-cylinder engine rather than a V6, or a V6 rather than a V8, is usually the way to go if you want to get the best fuel economy. Likewise, small, light cars tend to be more miserly with fuel than larger, bulkier vehicles.

2 While idling, a vehicle eats up fuel without logging any kilometer. Don't let the engine run at idle for any longer than necessary. With most gasoline engines, it's more efficient to turn off the engine rather than idle for 30 seconds or longer.

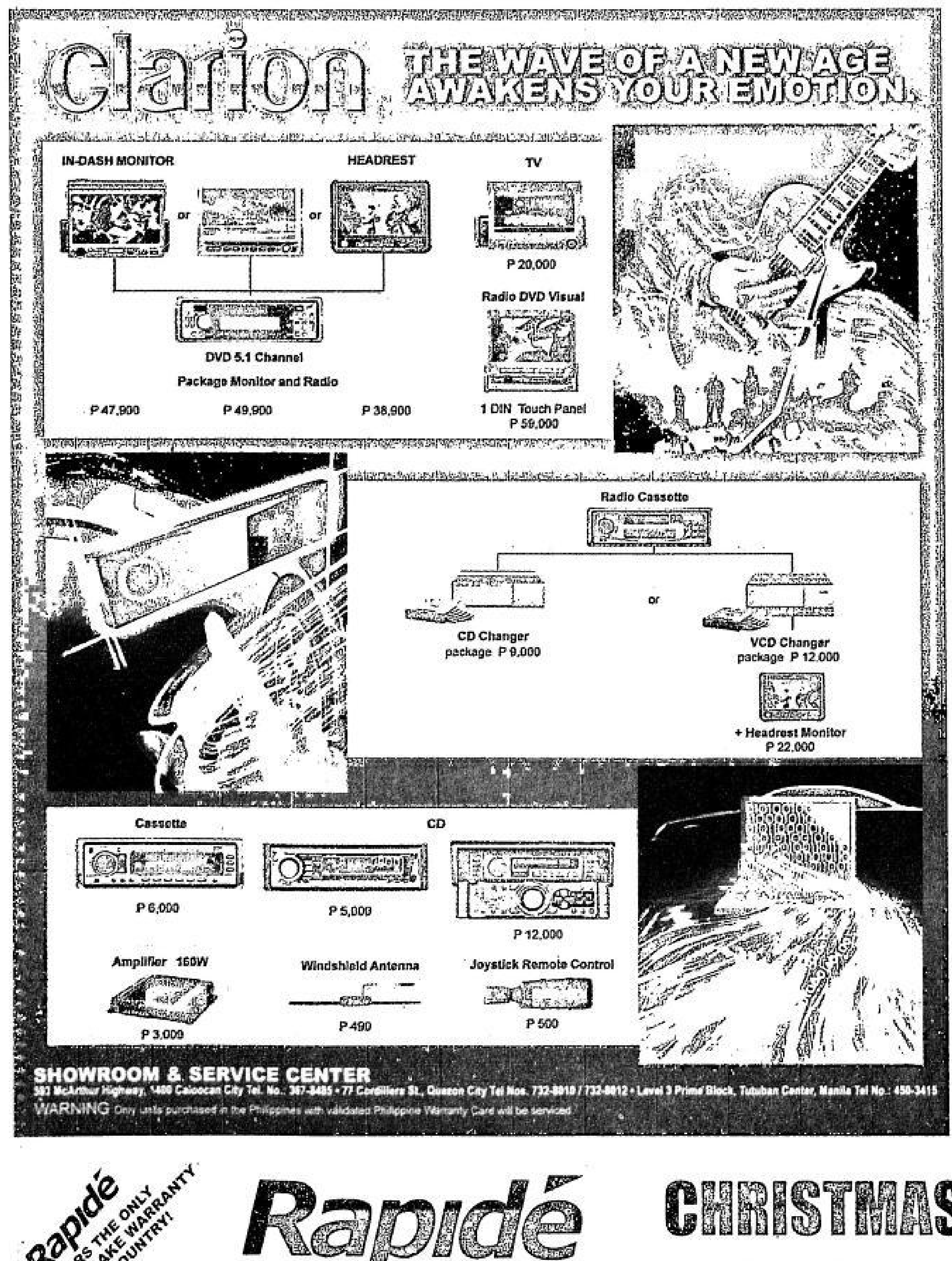
3 If you can, avoid hard acceleration or braking. Driving smoothly and steadily makes the best use of your fuel and when you move out from a standstill, bring the car up to speed briskly but not abruptly.

4 Once up to speed, maintain a steady pace in top gear. Varying your speed a lot wastes fuel. Smooth acceleration, cornering and braking not only save fuel, but also extend the life of the engine, transmission and brakes.

5 When driving on highways, over 50 percent of engine power goes to overcoming aerodynamic drag. Try not to add to the drag by carrying things on top of your vehicle as a loaded roof rack can decrease a car's fuel economy by 5 percent. Also, don't ride with your windows open on the highway as this also disturbs the outside airflow and creates extra drag.

6 A clogged air filter alone can cause up to a 10 percent increase in fuel consumption. Be sure to follow the maintenance schedule in your vehicle's manual, and act promptly if you sense any unusual sound, smell, or vibration.

7 Keep your tires properly inflated. Underinflated tires require more energy to roll, which not only wastes fuel but wears the tires faster. The recommended tire pressures are found on a label inside the car or ask your dealer about it.



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Coming-up cars ... eventually

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

"IS IT TRUE THAT THE TOYOTA ALTIS will be phased out beginning 2008?" This question emailed by a reader struck me because it coincided with news of the Toyota Auris's debut at the Bologna Motor Show in Italy last Dec. 5.

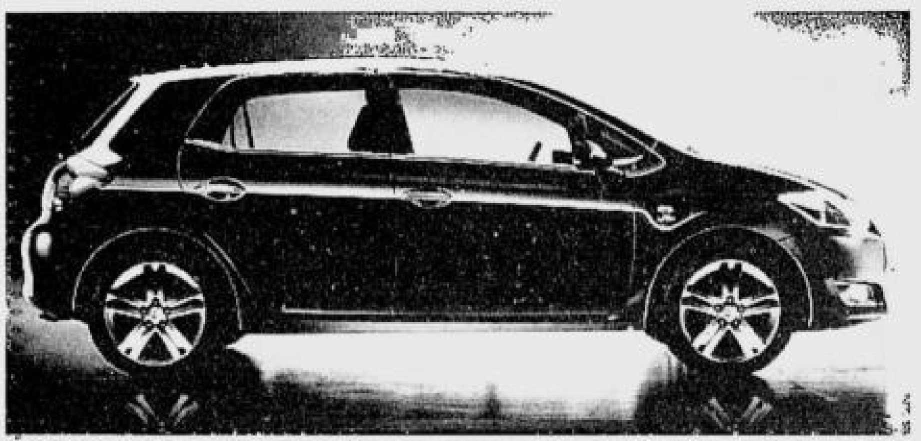
Described by some as the replacement of the Toyota Corolla in Europe and Japan, by others as the Corolla hatchback, the Auris will be launched across Europe as a new core model in the Toyota range in the first quarter of 2007. The question is: Will the Auris be introduced eventually in the Asia-Pacific region to replace the Altis, a.k.a. the Corolla?

We certainly hope so, since the Auris is way ahead of the Altis in automotive technology and design. Larger in every dimension than the Corolla and equipped with sporty 19-inch alloy wheels, the Auris has an all-new chassis and suspension system with an L-arm MacPherson strut setup up front and a torsion beam at the rear.

Offer

Toyota will offer the Auris in three-door and five-door hatchback body types with a choice of two gasoline engines, a 1.4 VVT-i and 1.6 Dual VVT-i and three diesel engines, 1.4 D-4D, 2.0 D-4D and 2.2 D-4D. All variants of the Auris have Electric Power Steering enhancing response to driver inputs.

Most likely, if and when Toyota decides to bring the Auris here, initially it will be the gasoline versions, given the inferior quality of diesel fuel in this country compared to Europe's. The Dual Variable Valve Timing (VVT-i) system of the 1.6-liter gasoline variant would attract car enthusiasts as Dual VVT-i (introduced here in the 2007 Camry) achieves better fuel efficiency while increasing power. While a six-speed manual transmission will be standard with the 2.0 and 2.2 diesel Auris, a new MultiMode transmission with paddle shift will be optional with the 1.6 Dual VVT-i and 1.4 D-4D variants.



TOYOTA Auris

Space concept

Toyota revealed the Auris space concept for the first time at the Paris Motor Show last September, signaling a new interpretation of the core Toyota design philosophy of Vibrant Clarity. Designed from the inside out, the Auris space concept is tall and spacious with a high waistline, short overhangs and forward balance as key features of the cabin architecture.

Inside the Auris, an innovative bridge-shaped center console raises the gear lever higher on the dashboard, closer to the driver, and integrates the handbrake, creating more open space below. The EasyFlat system allows simple one-touch folding of the rear seats to create a larger, flat-floored cargo area with 354-liter capacity. The 10 storage spaces around the cabin have a combined capacity of 32 liters.

Rear seat passengers in the Auris will enjoy more room than in the Corolla due to the Auris's greater cabin height and flat rear floor. As for safety, the Auris will be fitted with up to nine airbags with a driver's knee airbag as standard. All Auris variants have ABS with EBD and Brake Assist while higher-grade models will have Vehicle Stability Control and Traction Control in addition. All Auris models use Toyota's MICS (Minimun Intrusion Cabin System) to protect passengers from impact forces.

New Lancer

MITSUBISHI Lancer

But the Auris is not the only new car coming up in 2008. At the North American International Auto Show in Detroit this January, Mitsubishi will unveil the 2008 Lancer compact sports sedan with design cues from the Concept-X and Concept-Sportback shown at the 2005 Tokyo Motor Show. The "shark-nosed" front end of the new Lancer was inspired by jet fighter air intakes, the designers say. From the rear perspective, the new Lancer looks like an Alfa Romeo 156.

Built on the same global platform used for the 2007 Outlander SUV, the body is wider and has a longer wheelbase than the outgoing Lancer, but shorter in overall length. The redesigned Lancer will be launched progressively in world markets starting in spring 2007 in North America. A new Lancer Evolution supercar—Evo X—is also coming up.

CVT option

The non-Evo 2008 Lancer will have a 2.0-liter 152 hp aluminum DOHC Mivec 4-cylinder engine that produces 32 more horsepower than the current Lancer engine. It will be the first Mitsubishi in North America to offer an optional Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT) with a six-step "Sportronic" mode using magnesium steering wheel paddle shifters in the sport-tuned GTS model. For the first time, no traditional automatic transmission will be available in the Lancer, only a five-speed manual or the CVT option.

In that aspect, we are ahead of North America since CVT in Mitsubishi vehicles has been available here for years.

* * *

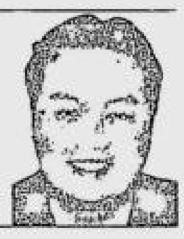
TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: A great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices. (William James)

* * *

E-mail comments to aida_sevilla@yahoo.com.

A gift of drift

MY DRIFT



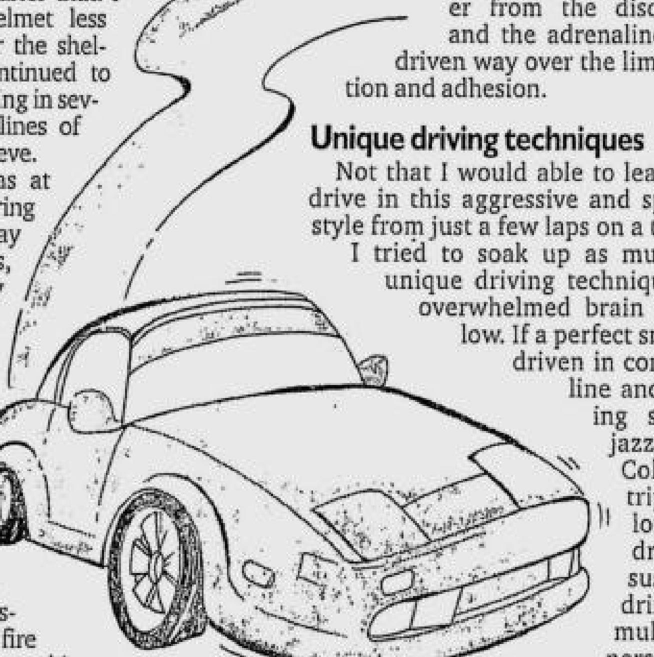
Andre Palma

ALEX PEREZ ROLLED INTO THE paddock with very little drama. Loud, raced prepped cars are commonplace, if not *de rigueur*, at the Batangas Racing Circuit. The black and orange S13 Sylvia (Nissan 180/200SX) reeked of gasoline and exhaust fumes as it passed where I stood; the exhaust droning the typical burbling and slightly less scandalous note of a tuned turbocharged engine.

I've known Alex for quite some time already, first encountering him during a briefing for some rally a few years ago. He had already been racing slalom events by the time he tried his hand at rallying and his performance at that particular Rally Pilipinas was very solid. Suffice it to say that a better driver and a better car are hard factors to overcome. I was blown away, left dead in the water, with a snowball's chance in hell. You get the picture.

Our driving lives took divergent paths soon after that. I hung up my helmet less than a year after the shellacking. Alex continued to drive, even dabbling in several other disciplines of motor sport I believe.

So there I was at BRC, the motoring hack on a track day with friends, scared witless by the notion of a 12-car, 5-lap, grid start finale with my precious daily drive. And there was Alex driving into the same paddock for a Sunday practice session with his fire breathing, tire smoking, turbo hissing drift machine.



As fate would have it, this chance meeting at the track would give me the opportunity to experience the lurid power slides, shrieking tires and violent g-forces from the passenger seat of the tuned, blown and prepped S13. Just how sideways did we get? Let's just say when you have to start looking out the side passenger and driver windows, for prolonged periods of time, to see in which direction the car is headed—the car is most definitely traveling broadsides first.

One of the top wheelmen

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, there are drifters in the Philippines and from what I gather from the grapevine; Alex is one of the top wheelmen in this spectacular, up and coming driving discipline. The roller coaster ride through the cambered turns and twists of the racetrack would confirm this without a shimmer of a doubt.

I had some of the most fun I've ever had in a vehicle, moving or parked, during the four laps of BRC in Alex's impromptu drift taxi. To my driver's credit there wasn't anything gentle about my initiation to the art of drifting. Attack was on his mind from the get go.

First corner onto the racetrack and the purpose-built Sylvia was already screaming the life and tread out of its rear Advan Neova track tires. It was only after several turns and bends later that I was able to recover from the disorientation and the adrenaline of being driven way over the limits of traction and adhesion.

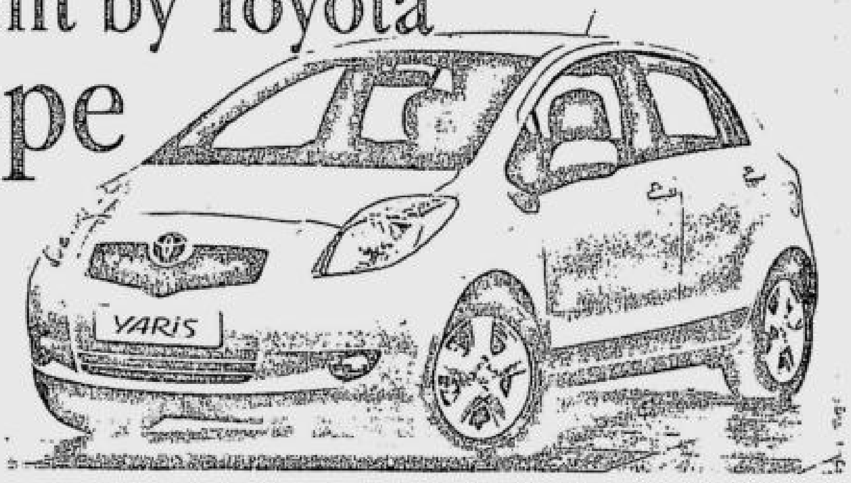
Unique driving techniques

Not that I would able to learn how to drive in this aggressive and spectacular style from just a few laps on a track—but I tried to soak up as much of the unique driving techniques as my overwhelmed brain would allow. If a perfect smooth lap, driven in conventional line and grip racing style is a jazzy, John Coltrane trip; then a long, drawn-out sustained drift through multiple corners is as hard hitting as the overdriven guitars of "Rage Against the Machine" at full volume.

All I can say is that the corner approaches were fast and off-line in relation to the by-the-book grip style that I have been using my entire sport driving life. Faster entry speeds coupled with turn-ins way, way on the inside of where cars are supposed to be, it is then but logical that any car will want to swap ends. Add to that quick steering-wheel input and some slick multipedal footwork and an awkward, unbalanced car can be made to sustain its moment of beautiful sliding chaos.

Drifting is brash, hard-core and adrenaline stoking. In an experience that moved me both figuratively and literally, I can honestly say that I'm now a believer, that now I'm hooked—I get Alex's drift.

1M Yaris built by Toyota in Europe



ON DEC. 11 AT 6 P.M., THE millionth Yaris rolled off the assembly line at Toyota Motor Manufacturing France. Since the start of production on Jan. 31, 2001, production at TMMF has increased steadily, supporting the growing sales success of Yaris, one of Toyota Motor Europe's core models, designed and built in Europe for Europeans.

Today, TMMF has a production capacity of 270,000 units per year and a workforce of 3,950 persons, operating in three shifts.

Tadashi Arashima, president and CEO, Toyota Motor Europe, praised this achievement by highlighting the quality of the work provided by the French factory.

Key player

"TMMF is a key player for Toyota's manufacturing operations in Europe. Since its launch, TMMF has consistently met the very demanding Toyota standards in terms of quality, efficiency and flexibility, delivering a valued product that has been Toyota's biggest seller in Europe since 2000. This milestone shows the relevance of our strategy of building our core models in Europe," Arashima said.

According to TMMF president Didier Leroy, this performance is based on "a localized, highly integrated manufacturing system. It has been made possible, thanks to a dynamic social policy that focuses on open recruitment and a systematic training process."

Said Leroy: "Our team members must possess the skills to deliver the expected quality, but most importantly we want them to share our key values of team work and continuous improvement."

Since the launch of its first generation model, Yaris has been a success story for Toyota in Europe. Named "Car of the Year 2000," acknowledged as the safest car in its segment by EuroNCAP, the first generation Yaris was delivered to more than 1.4 million customers in Europe between 1999 and 2005.

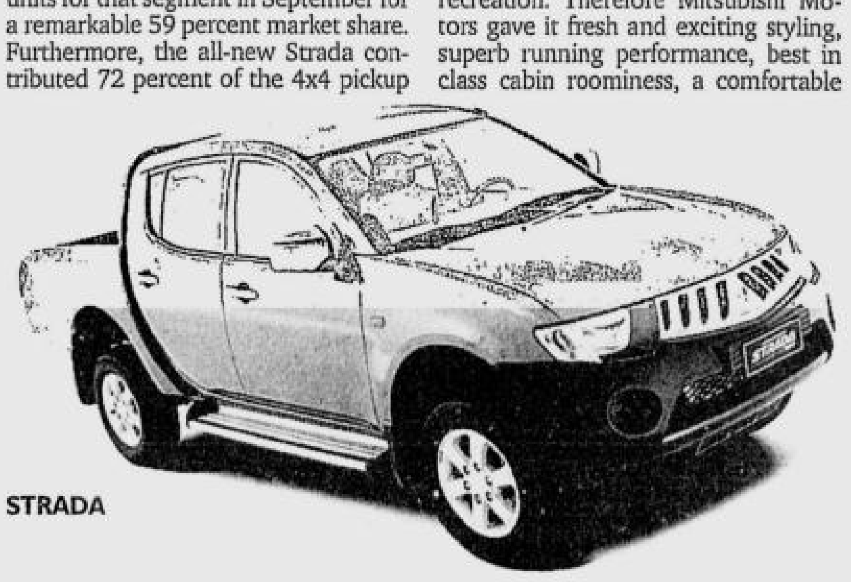
The new generation Yaris already proves to be an even bigger hit, with 2006 sales expected to reach 250,000 units. It offers an even more advanced package, including high levels of interior space and versatility, use of advanced technology, comfort, performance and safety. It has obtained a 5-star EuroNCAP rating (a record 35 points for adult protection).

Mitsubishi Strada tops 4x4 pickup segment

AFTER INTRODUCING ITS ALL-NEW Strada 4x4 pickups late September, Mitsubishi Motors Philippines has secured the No. 1 position in the 4x4 pickup category for 2 consecutive months.

According to the combined Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines (Campi) and Truck Manufacturers Association reports, the all-new Strada has sold 158 out of 267 units for that segment in September for a remarkable 59 percent market share. Furthermore, the all-new Strada contributed 72 percent of the 4x4 pickup category, as it sold 252 units in October out of total 352 4x4 pickups retailed.

Froy Dytianquin, Mitsubishi Motors Philippines' AVP for Marketing Services, commented that "We remain to be optimistic with the sales of the all new Strada for the coming months as we try to expand its usage. The all-new Mitsubishi Strada was built not just as a pickup but also as an everyday work horse vehicle for business, family and recreation. Therefore Mitsubishi Motors gave it fresh and exciting styling, superb running performance, best in class cabin roominess, a comfortable ride and SUV interior styling and trim.



STRADA

Invitation

I would like to invite everyone to visit any of our dealerships and test drive our new Strada to find out why it is fast becoming the choice in the 4x4 pick up category," Dytianquin added.

It can be recalled that the previous model Strada, was able to secure and retain market leadership of the 4x4 pickups for 7 straight years from the time it was introduced in 1997 and straight to 2003. Now Mitsubishi is aiming to repeat or even surpass this feat given the all-new Strada's class-leading features, good running performance and outstanding value for money proposition.

Aside from its very unique and distinct styling, the all-new Strada features the latest Turbocharged and Intercooled Direct Injection Diesel (DID) with Common Rail Diesel engine that is tuned to run on locally available diesel fuel.

Furthermore the all-new Strada boasts of having the roomiest cabin for better riding comfort at the same time having the running performance found on expensive SUVs. The all-new Strada is available at all MMPC dealerships nationwide.

Seaoil cuts E10 price, celebrates enactment of Biofuels Law

THE PRICE OF SEAOIL E10 OR gasoline blended with 10 percent ethanol is now cheaper by 50 centavos in all stations of major independent oil company Seaoil.

Seaoil president Glenn Yu announced this on Dec. 17 as he expressed excitement over the enactment of the Biofuels Act of 2006 which he believes would usher a "field of opportunities" for companies like Seaoil.

"As a way of celebrating the enactment of the Biofuels Law, Seaoil is reducing the price of Seaoil E10 by 50 centavos per liter. This means that the E10 gasoline you will buy in all Seaoil outlets nationwide will be 50 centavos cheaper than ordinary gasoline in other gas stations, making Seaoil E10 not only the cleanest fuel, but also the cheapest fuel in the land," he said.

Pioneering efforts

Seaoil has been championing the use of biofuels, or those fuels derived from farm crops, even before the biofuels bill was filed in Congress. The Department of Energy has even cited Seaoil for its pioneering efforts in bringing E10 and its benefits to the Philippine market as early as 2005.

In fact, Yu revealed that Seaoil has recorded some 4 million gas-ups of E10 since the company introduced the clean-burning, higher-octane fuel in August of last year.

Yu added that because of its aggressiveness in selling biofuels, Seaoil is now considered the first biofuels major in the Philippine petroleum industry.

"We at Seaoil are the first to sell biofuels in all of our 106 stations nationwide. Most players in the industry are just beginning to adjust to the requirements of the Biofuels Law, with some of them selling E10 in only a handful of stations," he explained.

Landmark legislation

The Biofuels Law is a landmark legislation considered by many as the most important work of the 13th Congress. It mandates the use of biofuels by blending 5 percent bioethanol—which comes from sugarcane or cassava—with gasoline within two years after the law takes effect. The blend will be increased to 10 percent within four years.

The law also requires the blending of one percent coco methyl ester with petroleum diesel within three months, increasing to two percent within two years.

Anticipating the growing demand for ethanol, Yu has announced that Seaoil would put up its own ethanol processing plant capable of producing 100,000 liters of ethanol from sugarcane a day.

Yu noted that the eventual switch to biofuels of the country's 5 million motor vehicles would be a welcome change that would not only ease the impact of rising oil prices but also secure a better future for the environment.

"It will also mean better livelihood for our countrymen in the rural areas who now have a new market for their crops," he said.

BUSINESS

Review sought on water firms' profit scheme

Concessionaires' exemption from 12% profit limit questioned

By Christine A. Gaylican

NOW THAT THE WATER RATES ARE SET to go up, two cause-oriented groups are calling for a review and revalidation of the profit-taking mechanism of the private water concessionaires as approved by the government regulator.

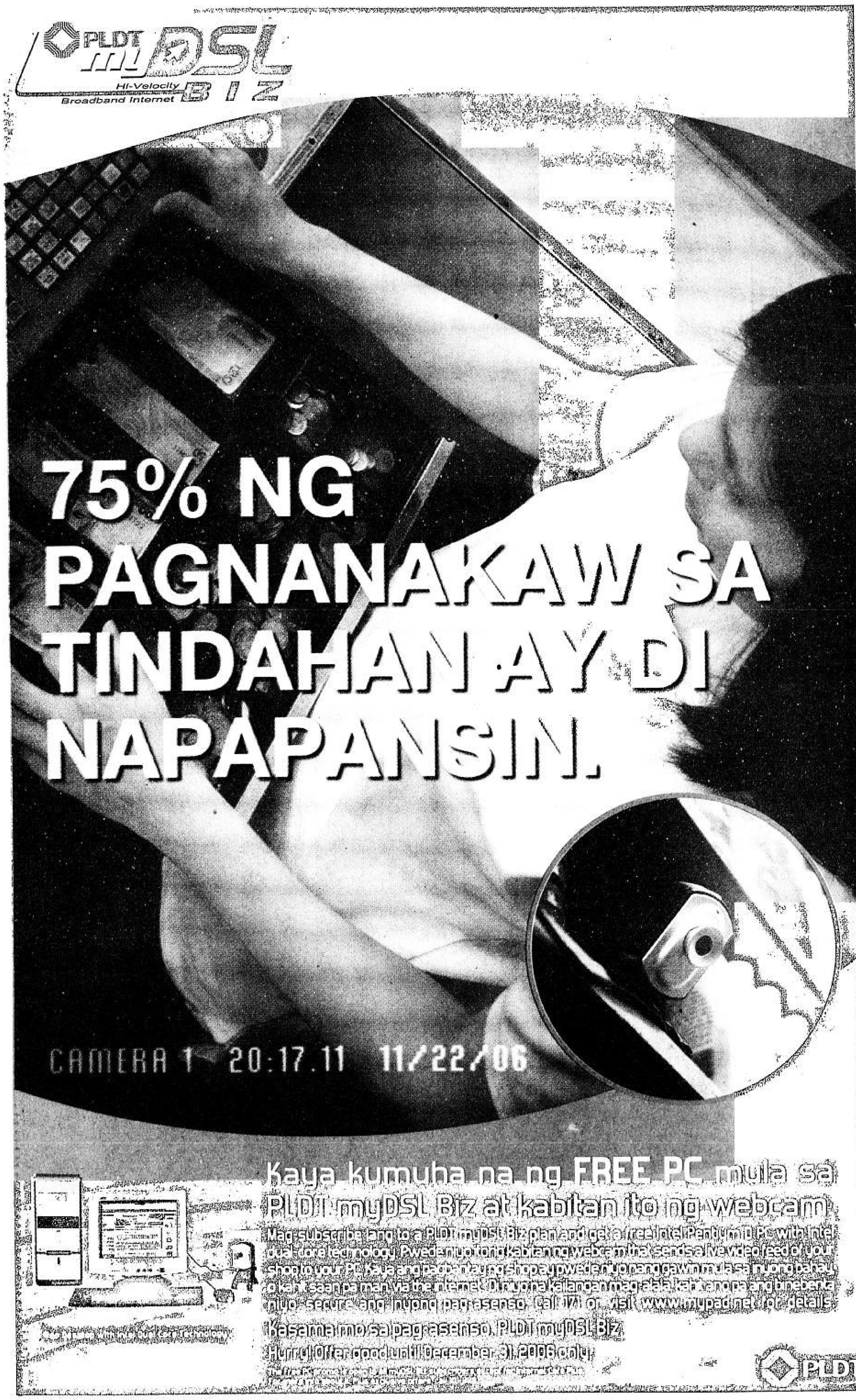
In separate petitions filed with both chambers of Congress, Bantay Tubig Network and Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan All Filipino Democratic Movement (Kaakbay) are seeking a review of resolutions issued by the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) that exempts Manila Water Company Inc. and the reprivatized Maynilad Water Services Inc. from the 12-percent profit margin limitation allowed for public utilities.

Kaakbay said that according to MWSS Board Resolution No. 2004-201 and Regulatory Office (RO) Resolution No. 04-006-CA, the water firms are mere agents and contractors, thus negating their nature as public utilities and allowing them to pass on their taxes to consumers.

"These concessionaires are allowed to charge consumers an additional P1.55 per cubic meter for Manila Water, and P4.14 per cubic meter for Maynilad per cubic meter of water," Kaakbay said in its letter. "(The figures) translate to about P6.33 billion for Manila Water, and P56.018 billion (for Maynilad) worth of corporate income taxes that are passed on to consumers."

Kaakbay added that, in terms of realizing profits, the resolutions of the MWSS and MWSS-RO also exempted the concessionaires from the 12-percent profit margin limitation set under Section 12 of the MWSS Charter.

"A Commission on Audit report in 1999 revealed that Manila Water has registered a 40.92-percent rate of return on rate base in 1999 and was able to make P281 million in excess income by that time," the group said. "Since this resolution has been issued, the concessionaires have been making huge profits," said Jude Esguerra, Bantay Tubig Network convenor.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Falsifying ITRs to secure bank loans riles BIR

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE IS cracking down hard on loan applicants who falsify their income tax returns just to have their bank loans approved.

The BIR in a statement said that not only will the bureau go after high-profile tax evaders, under the Run After Tax Evaders (RATE) program, it will also deal with middle-income tax cheats.

The BIR learned that some persons had altered their ITRs to make it appear that they have higher income in order to facilitate their loan applications with banks.

Those caught falsifying their ITRs would be charged for violating Section 255 of the National Internal Revenue Code (supplying inaccurate tax information), and Article 172(1) of the Revised Penal Code (falsification of public or official documents).

The BIR last week filed charges against two persons from Bulacan, another from Manila, and a fourth from Antipolo City, for allegedly using fake ITRs.

The BIR said the suspects submitted falsified ITRs to their banks to meet the requirements for loan applications. The four were caught when the banks checked with the BIR and learned that the ITRs were not authentic.

"Falsification was done to make it appear that respondents have a stable source of income, and thus mislead their banks into approving their loan applications," the BIR said.

Revised Circular No. 472 of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas mandates loan applicants and their comakers to submit a copy of their latest ITRs, duly stamped as received by the BIR, to their banks. They are also required to submit a waiver of confidentiality of information on their tax payments.

Requiring ITRs from loan applicants does not only help the BIR catch those making false income claims, it also helps the bureau to encourage people to religiously file their income tax returns and pay the proper taxes.

Aside from banks, some foreign embassies were likewise urged to require the submission of ITRs from people wanting to travel abroad.

The BIR said asking institutions to require the submission of ITRs for various transactions will help government improve tax collection.

Baguio Gold edges closer to acquiring PAL

By Riza T. Olchondra

BAGUIO GOLD HOLDINGS CORP. HAS SEcured the clearance from the Philippine Airlines' receiver for a debt-to-equity swap that would enable the holding company to buy the flag carrier.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, the holding company of Lucio Tan said that it has received confirmation that its debt-to-equity swap with Trustmark Holdings Corp. does not violate PAL's debt rehabilitation plan.

After the swap, Baguio Gold will proceed to buy 81.6 percent of Philippine Airlines from the six companies that own the nation's biggest carrier. The publicly traded holding company will then have control of their shareholdings, as well as liabilities.

The six firms are Ascot Holdings Inc., Cube Factor Holdings Inc., Maxell Holdings Corp., Network Holdings and Equities Inc., Pol Holdings Inc. and Sierra Holdings and Equities Inc.

Tan's Trustmark Holdings Corp., which owns 67 percent of Baguio Gold, will then end up with 97.6 percent of the listed company once the debts of the six PAL shareholders are converted into equity. The rest will be held by minor shareholders.

Baguio Gold needs to increase its authorized capital to P20 billion from the current P400 million to finance the buyout, after which it will have control of PAL.

PAL, meanwhile, will use the bulk of the proceeds from the sale of shares for its fleet expansion program. It announced early this month that it had ordered six Boeing Co. planes for about $1.5 billion to increase flights to the United States, Canada, Australia, and possibly resume flights to Europe.

The agreement, which PAL president Jaime Bautista signed with Boeing vice president for sales Rob Laird in Honolulu last month, covers a firm order for two B777-300ER jets and purchase rights for two additional units.

Separately, PAL has signed a letter of intent with GE Commercial Aviation Services for the lease of two B777-300ER aircraft.

The flag carrier currently flies to 24 destinations in 13 countries and territories

LIFESTYLE
Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso** Chief of Correspondents **Pam Pastor**
sms feedback: inquirer life name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) and 386 (Smart) **or email us at** lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

to be young • to be you • to be young • to be young • To be you!

2bU

to the Rescue

We wanted to go beyond the pages and find a way to touch your lives in a concrete way. This new section, which is our Christmas and year-long gift to you, will do just that. Here are 21 2bU! rescues—our way of celebrating INQUIRER's 21st anniversary.

WE'VE DONE A LOT OF fun things while working on 2bU! issues. We've explored new places, we've tried different jobs, we've met all kinds of people, we've tested our boundaries and left our comfort zones. But the most fun we have is when we get the chance to interact with our readers—when you join our contests and we give you prizes, when you contribute to our scrapbooks, when you write us e-mails, when we meet you face to face.

For a while now we've had a growing desire to go beyond the pages and touch your life in more concrete ways. And we knew just how to do that.

Over the years, we've built a network of contacts—people we work with regularly to help produce exciting and interesting issues for you.

We thought, why not use this network to find answers to your real needs, to turn your wishes into reality?

That's when 2bU! to the Rescue was born. The idea has been brewing for months now. We tested it in June, when we asked Merit to give school supplies to street children who were going to start attending school. And now is the perfect time to launch it because it is Christmas.

This was originally meant to be our gift to you—and this gift will become a regular part of our section. It is our plan to hold rescues weekly—the more realized dreams, the better.

For two weeks, we asked you to tell us about your greatest desires. Hundreds of you responded, some writing Dear Santa letters, others sharing gut-wrenching stories. We read every single one of them.

We were especially touched by the fact that majority of you asked for things not for yourselves but for the people you love.

Inspired by Oprah, Make A Wish and, yes, "Wish Ko Lang," we started choosing the first rescues that we would carry out. We made phone calls—a lot of phone calls. And everyone we called responded enthusiastically. No one said no.

Our entire week was packed with rescues we needed to carry out. In the past few days, our friends have given away a TV, an mp3 player, spa treatments, boxes and boxes of pizza, a ton of doughnuts, makeup sets, a tattoo, a guitar, eyeglasses and more.

We said that we wanted to make your dreams come true. But ,the truth is, this new section is a dream come true for us. This was a gift for you, but it also became a gift for us.

Each time someone said, "Yes!" or "I can do that!" or "Done!," we were elated. And a lot of the people and companies we spoke with offered much more than we expected.

We've always believed in the goodness of people—and this project has strengthened that belief.

What you'll read in our pages is the first batch of rescues. Twenty-one stories, one for each beautiful year in INQUIRER's history. We're just getting started.

Here's to love, peace and more selfless wishes.

And yes, we're working on getting that *carabao.*

E-mail your wishes to 2butotherescue@gmail.com

If you or your company would like to help with our rescues, e-mail 2burescuers@gmail.com

FULLY BOOKED marketing manager Rhea Llamas holds the book for Charmin.

The flying book

All she wanted was something to read

INQUIRER 2BU! LOVES readers—not just 2bU! readers, but all kinds of readers. So when Charmin Mae Laude of Davao City wrote to us about a book that she really wanted to read, we didn't even think twice.

"I've been an avid fan of the 2bU! section because I find it very informative. I write to you for the first time because I want something for myself this Christmas. This is just a simple wish but it will really bring joy to me. I want to have a book by Paulo Coelho. I read the very popular book "The Alchemist," which I borrowed from my friend, and I found it very inspiring. A friend told me that it's a must to read his other book titled "Eleven Minutes." Unfortunately, I don't know anybody that I can borrow it from."

We called Fully Booked's Tals Diaz and asked if she could help. Tals said, "Sure!" A couple of days later, a copy of Paulo Coelho's "Eleven Minutes" arrived at the 2bU! office.

Then we called Air21 to pick up the book and send it on its merry way.

Cha said, "Thank you very much for the early Christmas gift. I am really happy that you are going to grant my simple wish. I hope you will make a lot of people happy this Christmas season."

We hope that by the time this article comes out, Cha is already engrossed in her new Paulo Coelho book.

Enjoy, Cha!

Fully Booked is located at Rockwell, Promenade, Gateway and Mall of Asia. Visit www.fullybookedonline.com

Pam Pastor

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25-26 Wack-Wack Yuletide Blessings Bazaar, Wack-Wack Golf and Country Club Multi-Purpose Hall

DECEMBER
2-3 St. James the Great Bazaar, Cuenca Court, Ayala Alabang
6-10 Paskong Pinoy Grand Christmas Festival, Expo Centro, Araneta Center Cubao
9-10 Karl Edward Bazaar, NBC Tent, The Fort, Taguig
15-17 Karl Edward Bazaar, NBC Tent, The Fort, Taguig
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THE LIGHTHOUSE Center's library and play area

A place to read and play

By Pam Pastor
Photos by Ryan Lim

This was our first 2bU! To the Rescue, although we didn't know it then

WE DIDN'T KNOW IT then, but our partnership with Lorenzo Veneracion, a retired judge who, with his Lighthouse Center for Children Foundation, has been taking care of disadvantaged children in Payatas and other areas was the first 2bU! to the Rescue.

In December of 2006, we wrote about how his e-mail about his foundation touched our hearts and led us to action. We raised money, collected goods and visited the children not just to hand over the donations but to spend time with the kids and serve them lunch.

We were overwhelmed by the kindness of Judge Lore and the people around us who willingly shared what they have with the kids.

Our relationship with Lighthouse didn't end there. Because after the article, so many other people and companies expressed their desire to do what they can to help.

Earlier this year, we returned to the Lighthouse Center for a special visit.

Tetra Pak had called and expressed its desire to create a library and play area for the children of the Lighthouse Center.

JUDGE Lore reads to a child.

SPAGHETTI love

SHOPPING at Shopwise

LOADING the goodies

THE KIND people of Shopwise

KUYA Ramil the magician

"This project is a part of Tetra Pak's commitment to educate kids about the value of recycling and protecting the environment, which is at the core of Tetra Pak's motto—'Protects what's good,'" said Tetra Pak's communication and environment manager Tess Raymundo.

To promote recycling, Tetra Pak has a year-round used carton collection contest in about 100 private schools in Metro Manila. The contest aims to make consumers aware of the fact that Tetra Pak cartons are 100-percent recyclable and come from paper, a renewable resource.

It is only fitting that the bookshelves and the tables and chairs that Tetra Pak gave to the Lighthouse Center were made of recycled chip boards that were manufactured out of used Tetra Pak beverage cartons.

The Trans-National Paper Corp. recycled the used cartons into chip boards that were then crafted into furniture and other novelty items by Tahanang Walang Hagdan.

To brighten the library and play area, a mural was painted by Tetra Pak employees and friends including Ria Edrosalan, Joy Cabrillos, Dennis Capacillo, Marvin Magpile and Raul Ventura.

The day we returned to Lighthouse Center to open the library and play area for the kids was a fun and busy one.

Our first stop was Shopwise, where we claimed the P10,000 worth of groceries they had pledged.

Solicitous Shopwise people

The kindess of the people in Shopwise was overwhelming. We had a list of needs from the Lighthouse and Ms Maika and the supermarket's supervisors were all there to help make sure we would get everything on the list.

When Jas, the produce supervisor, saw that I had a sack of onions and a sack of garlic on the list, he asked one of the sales assistants to get some from their stock room.

"*Pare, piliin mo yung pinakamagaganda,*" he said, not knowing I could hear him. I will never forget that.

We filled carts with noodles, rice, dried fish, mongo beans, gallons of soy sauce—things the soup kitchen needs on a daily basis.

Soon, we were back outside Shopwise and everyone was helping us load the groceries into the back of the truck.

Marvin the Dairy Supervisor approached me: "*Ma'am yung milk po sana ilagay natin sa loob, baka kasi umasim sa init ng araw. Baka sumakit ang tiyan ng mga bata.*" I would never forget that, too.

We arrived at the center and we visited the library and play area that Tetra Pak had built for the kids.

A PLACE/ C4

THE KIDS enjoy the rides.

One enchanted day

Text and photos by Pam Pastor

ANDY ABUNDO, barangay captain of Barangay Marilag in Project 4, QC, wrote to us about the kids in his neighborhood.

"I'm hoping that you could grant my wish for the less-fortunate kids in our barangay. I would like to ask your kind hearts to bring the less-fortunate kids of Barangay Marilag to Enchanted Kingdom so they will experience the joy of being in a world-class amusement park.

There are at least 30 kids who are dreaming for this chance of a lifetime. If given the chance, this will surely boost their morale, giving them the confidence to be part of the community. It will surely be one of the most unforgettable Christmases they will ever have."

When Dennis Cruz, vice president of marketing and business development of Enchanted Kingdom, heard about the e-mail which Andy had sent 2bU! to the Rescue, he had one word for us: "Sure!"

Soon, we were corresponding with Miles Sarmiento, Enchanted Kingdom's corporate communications section head, planning the kids' visit.

But three days before the scheduled trip, we still faced a big problem. We had no idea how to bring the kids to Enchanted Kingdom.

I felt so desperate that I changed my YM status to "Help! I need a bus!"

Victory Liner ended up rescuing us.

VICTORY Liner brings the kids to Enchanted Kingdom.

VICTORY LINER

Two people gave me the number of the same person who could help: Victory Liner's Marivic de Jesus.

It didn't matter that it was last-minute, or it was our first phone conversation. Marivic said yes.

The kids of Barangay Marilag—along with a few parents and members of the barangay who would serve as their guardians—were going to Enchanted Kingdom.

"Victory is victory!" one of the guardians said.

As the bus started rolling out of Victory Liner's Cubao Station last Sunday, the kids started screaming in excitement. They sounded like they were already on a roller coaster.

At Enchanted Kingdom, they enjoyed the rides, ate delicious meals and even got to bring home Enchanted Kingdom goodies.

Each time they walked past us, they waved, smiled and said: "Thank you *po*!"

The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (Owwa) was having its Family Day at Enchanted Kingdom on the same day. And even Owwa's employees did their bit in spreading the message of kindness.

As the guardians were trying to figure out what to buy for the kids' dinner, some people from Owwa who were leaving early handed them meal stubs that they could use.

Although Andy planned to return to Quezon City early, it was clear the kids wanted to stay.

Worried about having the bus out too late, I sent an SMS to Marivic: "Is it okay if the bus leaves a little past 9 p.m.? We want the kids to see the fireworks."

"Sure!" was her quick reply.

When the fireworks were about to start, the kids lay flat on the ground and stared up at the sky.

They screamed in delight as the colorful explosions lit up the dark night.

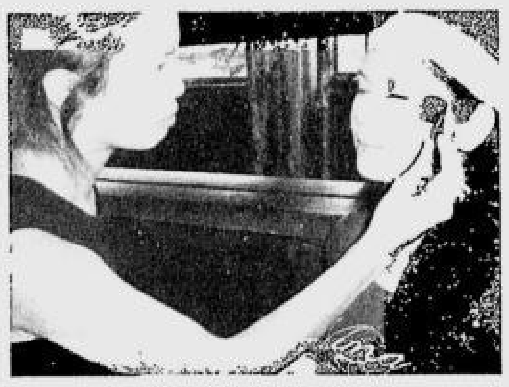
On the bus on the way back, a lot of them fell asleep, exhausted from a full day of fun and excitement.

It was a beautiful day—for the kids, for the adults, for us—and one that we'll all remember for a very long time.

LUNCH break

SNAPSHOTS of the memorable day

THERE are enough doughnuts for everyone.



YZA does Charisma's makeup.

Queens for a day

Doughnuts for kids and makeovers for teachers

By Pam Pastor

WHEN WE ANNOUNCED 2bU! TO the Rescue, it was our secret wish that companies that would hear about it would also express their desire to help even without us calling them.

Hot Loops was the first company to do this. Through Dennis Heruela of Stratworks, it expressed its desire to do something with 2bU! to the Rescue.

And so when we received a letter from Charisma Belardo, a volunteer teacher at BMKL in Quezon City, we knew we had to call Hot Loops.

Charisma wrote to tell us about the Christmas party they were planning for the kids of their kindergarten class: "Would you like to treat our students with snacks?"

Hot Loops promised to send doughnuts and party hats for all the kids.

But because we love teachers and because we have so much admiration for Charisma and her colleagues who devote their time as volunteers at BMKL, we thought we'd plan a treat for them as well.

We asked Shu Uemura's Tina Tinio if Shu Uemura could put together makeup kits for the teachers. When she heard their story she said: "Sure! And let's give them makeovers!"

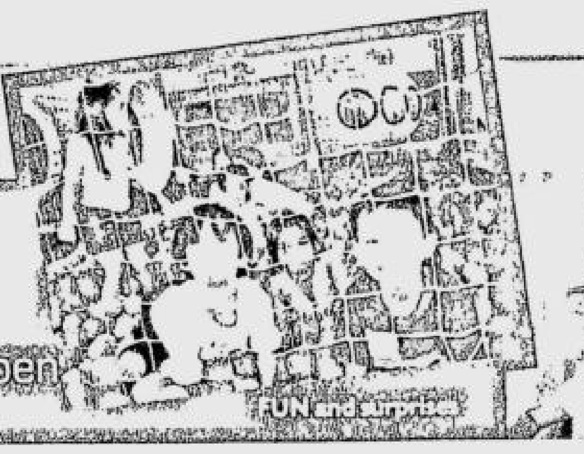
On the day of the party, Hot Loops sent over a hundred doughnuts—so many that the kids, the parents and the teachers were able to enjoy them, too.

Yza Palmero, one of Shu Uemura's makeup artists, surprised the teachers with makeovers and special gifts from Shu Uemura.

"We were treated like queens! We felt so beautiful!" one teacher said.

YZA Palmero and volunteer teachers hold their gifts from Shu Uemura. ARCHIE MAMAWAG

was a young barangay captain's dream to give
e less fortunate kids of his neighborhood an unforgettable
hristmas. Enchanted Kingdom and Victory Liner made it happen



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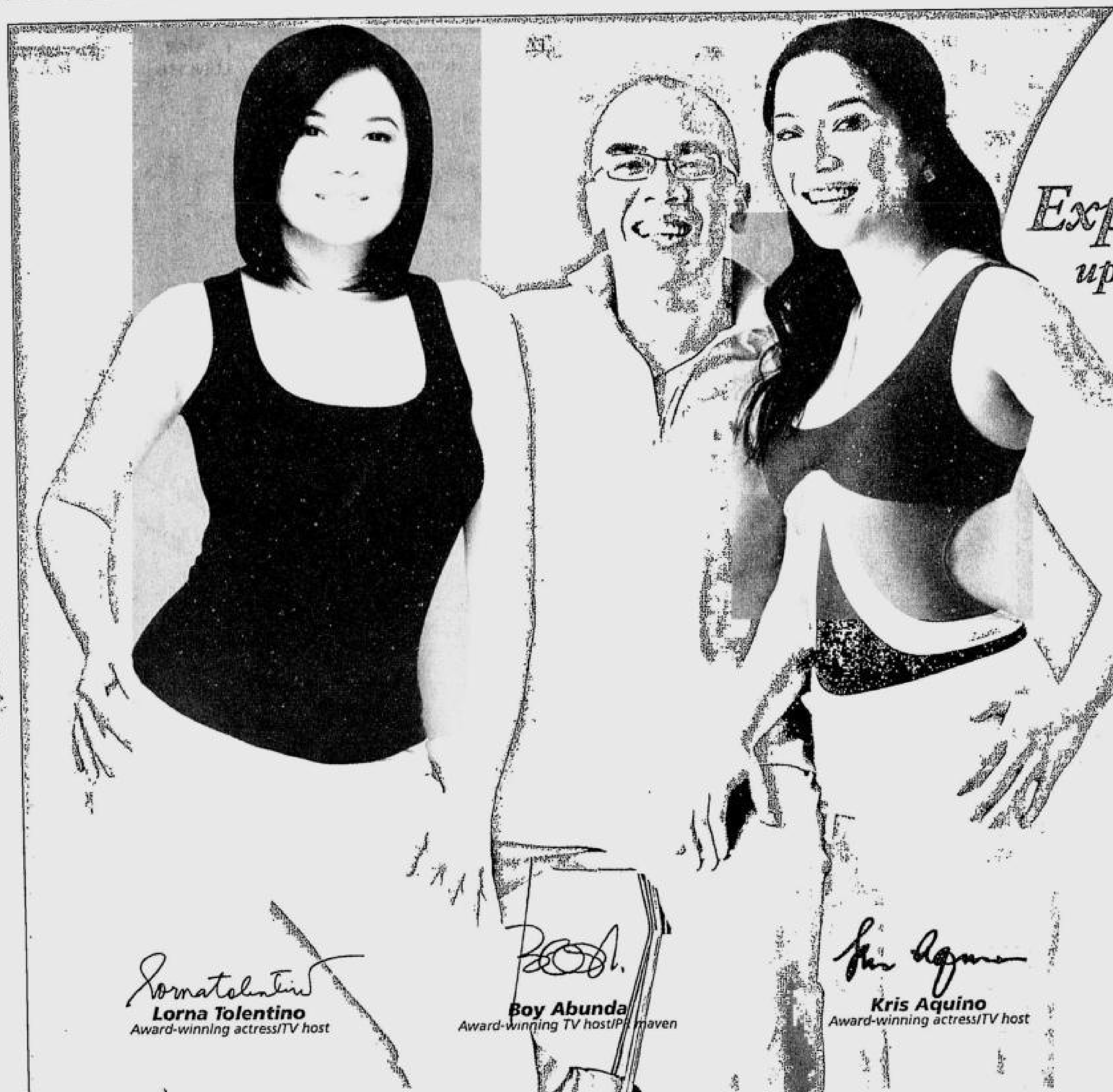

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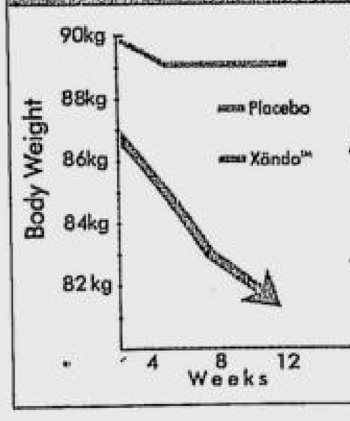

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Dentures for dad

AARON and his dad Tony

RYAN LIM

'My father is a preacher of the gospel. He has no teeth while teaching,' said 17-year-old Aaron

DREAMING of dentures

PATRICK PASTOR

DR. CHRISSIE and Dr. Monch give Tony a royal dental treatment.

By Pam Pastor

AFTER READING JUST THE first paragraph of 17-year-old Aaron Aguila's letter, we already knew we were granting his wish.

"My father, Antonio Aguila, is a preacher of the gospel and is living by faith in the word of God. He has no teeth while teaching."

Aaron wanted dentures for his father.

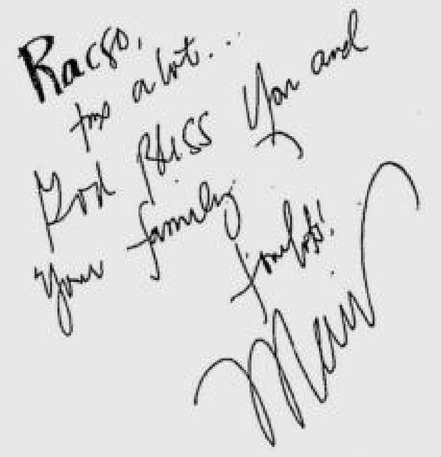
"I know in my heart that my father has the desire to have dentures even if he doesn't tell us. Please let this be my Christmas gift for him."

We called our favorite young dentists, 27-year-old Dr. Chrissie Capicoy and 25-year-old Dr. Lourdes Hortillas, who told Aaron's father Tony to visit their clinic. When asked why they didn't think twice about granting Aaron's wish, they said "this is our chance to use our profession to help others."

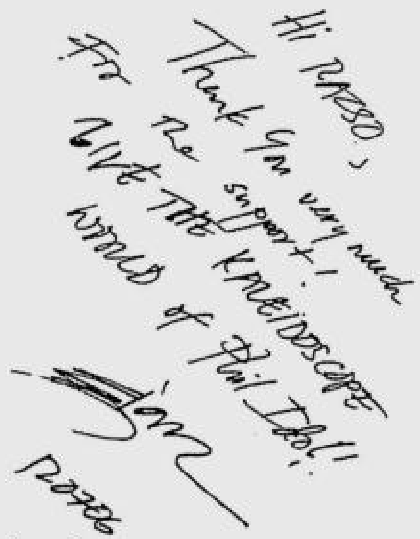
Chrissie and Monch aren't new to using their field of expertise to make a difference in other people's lives. They often go on dental missions even to far places. Chrissie recently had one in Ilocos.

After his first appointment with his dentists, Aaron's dad sent us a text message. "*Maraming salamat. Sinukatan at binunutan na ako kanina. Salamat kay* Dr. Chrissie and Dr. Monch, sa 2bU! at sa INQUIRER."

Soon, Tony will return to the clinic to try on his dentures. By Christmas, he will have a perfect smile, and new teeth to help him enjoy the family's Noche Buena better.



Racso, tnx a lot..
God Bless you and
your family
Godbless!
Mau



Hi RACSO,
Thank you very much
for the support!
LIVE THE KALEIDOSCOPE
WORLD of Phil Idol!
Jan

The search for Philippine idol... autographs

By Ruth L. Navarra

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT AN autograph? For a fan, it's everything! I should know because I've had my share of craziness during the F4 craze a few years back.

That's why when Pam Pastor (2bu!'s chief of correspondents) caught me in my YM the day before the celebration of INQUIRER's 21st anniversary/Christmas party with a simple request, I couldn't say no.

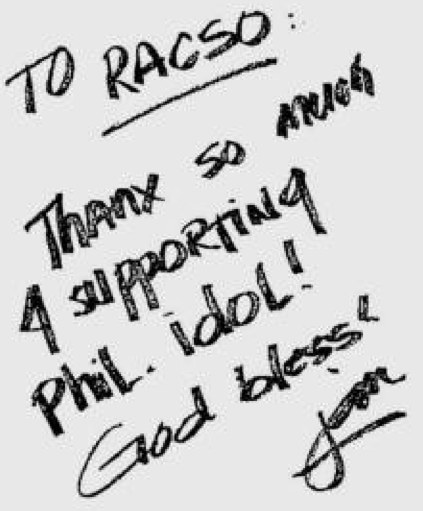
The task? Ask for the autograph of four "Philippine Idol" finalists—Stef Lazaro, Gian Magdangal, Jan Nieto and Mau Marcelo—for 2bU! reader Racso Onarres. The reader said he already had every "Idol" finalist's autograph except for these four.

Pam found out that the "Philippine Idols" were among those who would perform in our party. So my task was made easier. I could just pop inside the artists' lounge during the party.

This was where Entertainment reporter Bayani San Diego came in. I told him about my sworn duty and he said he would help out.

While keeping the invited performers comfortable before they went onstage, Bayani remembered to call me up and told me to come to the lounge. When I got there, an officemate who knew me and played badminton with me for the past few months wouldn't let me in until Bayani gave his word that it was okay. Security was that tight.

When Bayani confirmed that I wasn't out to kidnap any of the idols, they let me in. The task of asking for their autograph was uneventful as Mau, Gian and Jan were very cooperative and polite.



TO RACSO:
Thanx so much
4 supporting
Phil. Idol!
God bless!

But a new problem presented itself as Stef Lazaro failed to show up. We waited inside the lounge, even after the "Idol's" performance of "Kaledeiscope World" but still no Stef.

Bayani suggested that I contact ABC 5's Jemmarie Ronquillo and ask for help. When I did, she was obliging and even offered a couple of tickets to the finals at the Araneta Coliseum for Racso. But it was too late as he only read his e-mail the following day.

It was a good thing that another Entertainment reporter, Marinel Cruz, came to the rescue. She was kind enough to get Stef's autograph.

When Mau won as "Idol," she said she was happy she could now afford a second-hand car. But for us here in INQUIRER, we're just happy to complete Racso's collection.

A place to read . . .

From page C2

We also brought books donated by National Book Store and by Tetra Pak partner schools like De La Salle Zobel.

As a treat, Tetra Pak also had a mini-party for the kids, complete with spaghetti, ice cream and milk and a very funny magician named Ramil who performed for the kids for free.

"Thank you *po*," the kids said and their words pinched my heart.

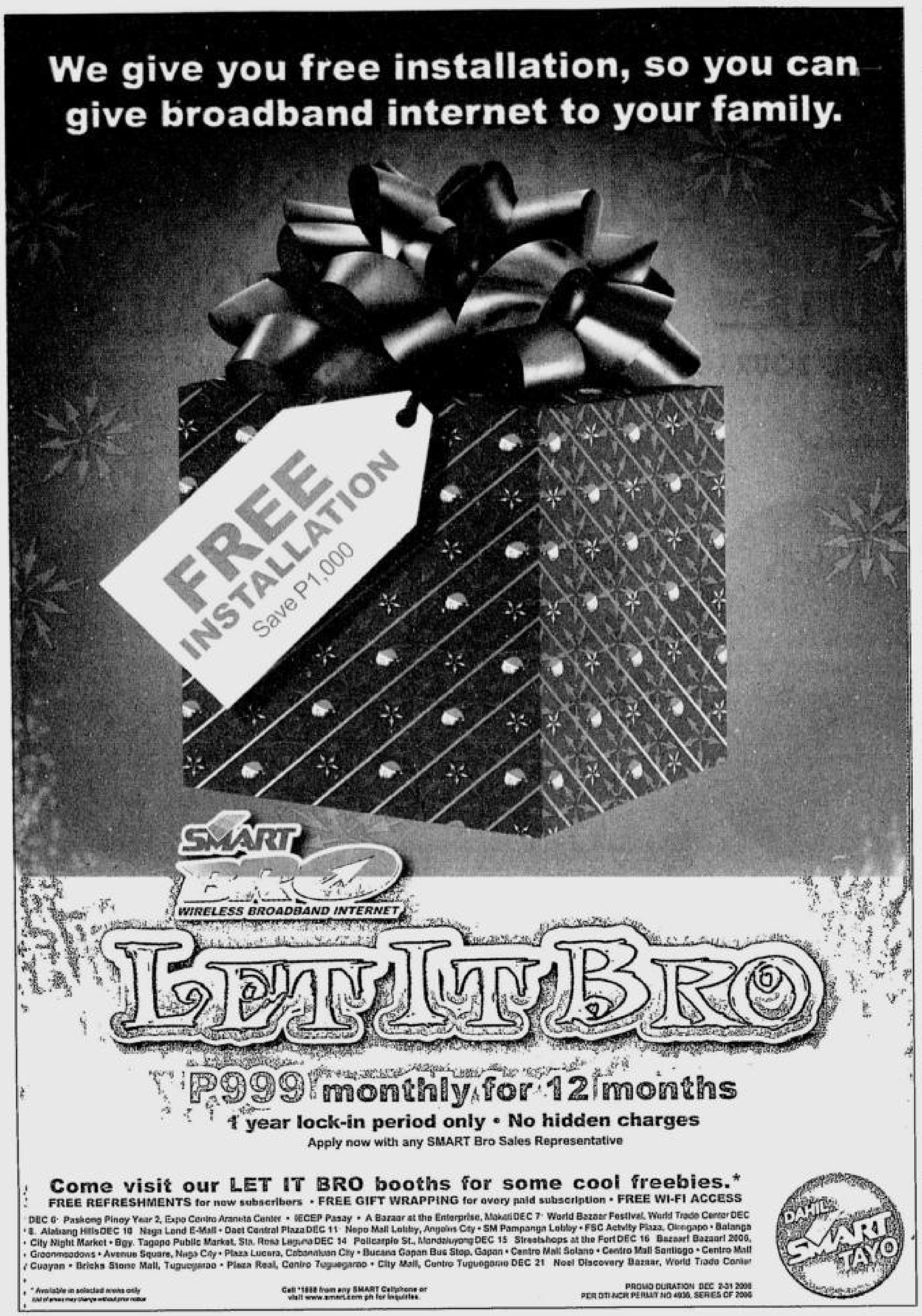
As we said goodbye, the kids kept waving and waving and waving. But it wasn't really goodbye yet.

Up to this day, we are still collecting toys and books for the Lighthouse Center. SM joined in on the fun by pledging P10,000 worth of toys, books and educational materials. We were able to get a lot of great stuff for the kids there.

You, too, can send books and toys for the children of Payatas and other Quezon City areas.

Each trip to the Lighthouse Center is a lesson in appreciation, in being thankful, in not taking your good life for granted and in knowing how much you can do for others.

Visit the Soup Kitchen's principal office at 121-41 Rotary Drive, NGC Housing Project, Pilot Area, Barangay Commonwealth QC. Call 9398288, 9304262, 4307666 and 0917-5252068. E-mail judgelore@soup-kitchen.org or rotasoup@edsamail.com.ph. Visit www.soup-kitchen.org



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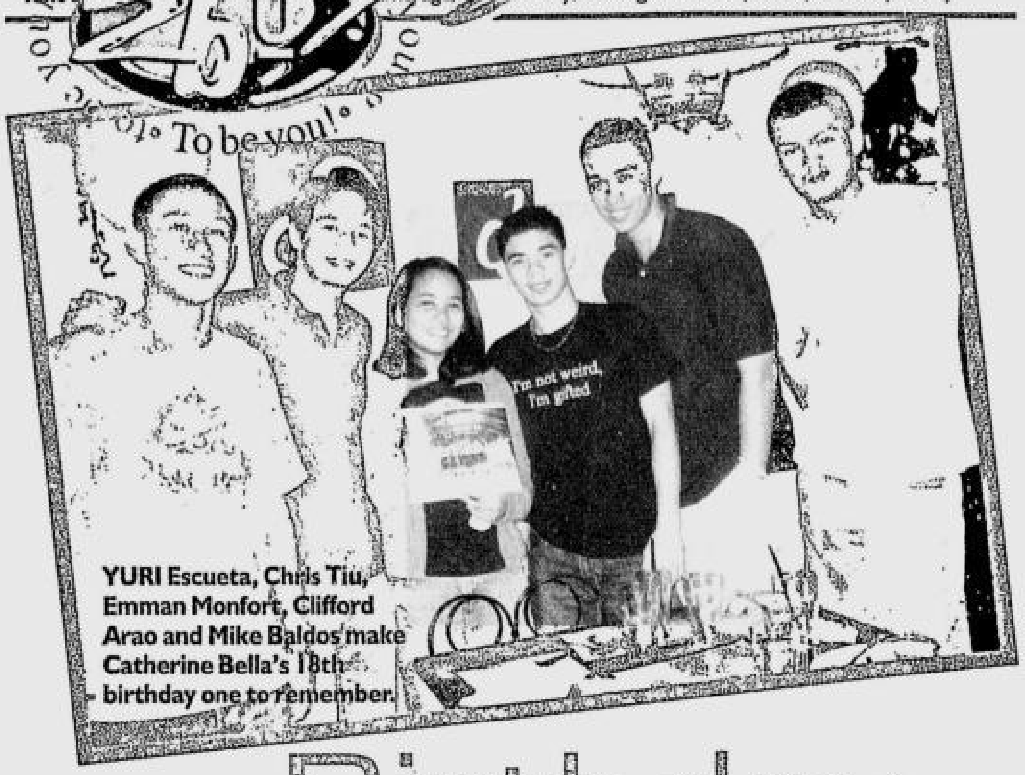
2bU
To be you!
I'm not weird, I'm gifted

YURI Escueta, Chris Tiu, Emman Monfort, Clifford Arao and Mike Baldos make Catherine Bella's 18th birthday one to remember.

Birthday high

2bU! heeds a loving mother's request and surprises Catherine Danielle Bella on her 18th birthday with her favorite basketball team and sneakers

Text and photos by Cheryl Tiu
2bU! Correspondent

IT WAS VERY TOUCHing. INQUIRER 2bU! had received an e-mail from Cynthia Bella, a mother from Cagayan de Oro, telling us about her daughter, Catherine Danielle Bella, a BS Management scholar at Ateneo de Manila University, who was celebrating her 18th birthday.

"In my own small way [the only thing I could afford], I arranged a surprise mini-party for her," the e-mail read. "Aside from just being simple, I also cannot attend since I cannot afford the extra expense anymore. Can you take my place and make her 18th birthday celebration one of the most memorable days in her life?"

She added that Catherine is a big fan of the Ateneo Blue Eagles ("She saves her allowance just to watch the UAAP games. She went

BIRTHDAY/ D4

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- Lito Colona with son, Mark Colona
President/CEO, Eagle Express Group
Chairman, ASEAN Federation of Forwarders Associations

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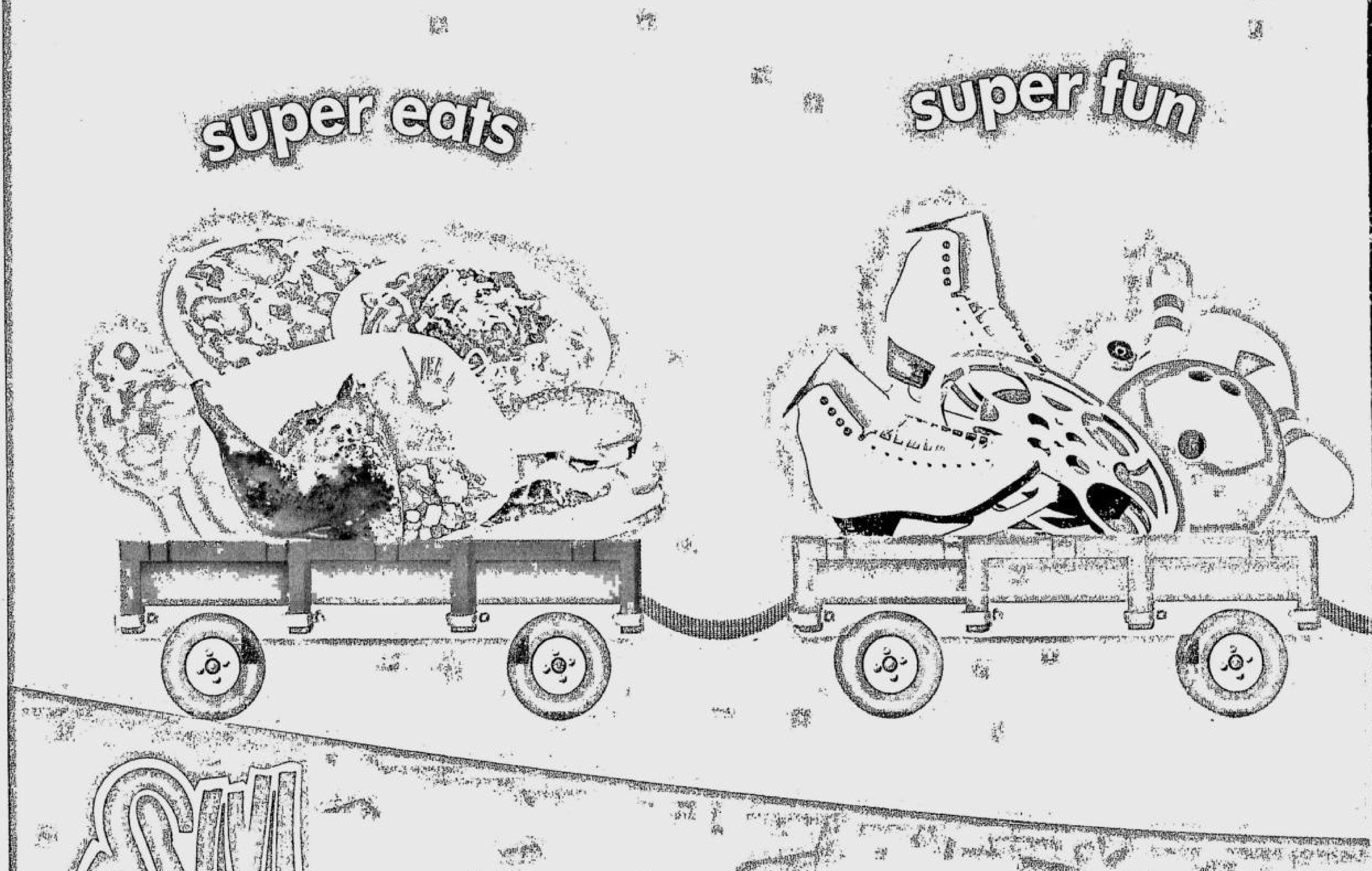

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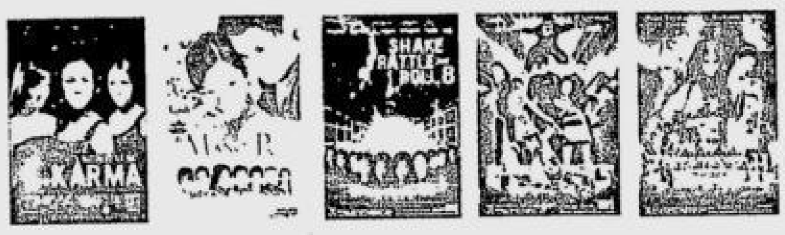

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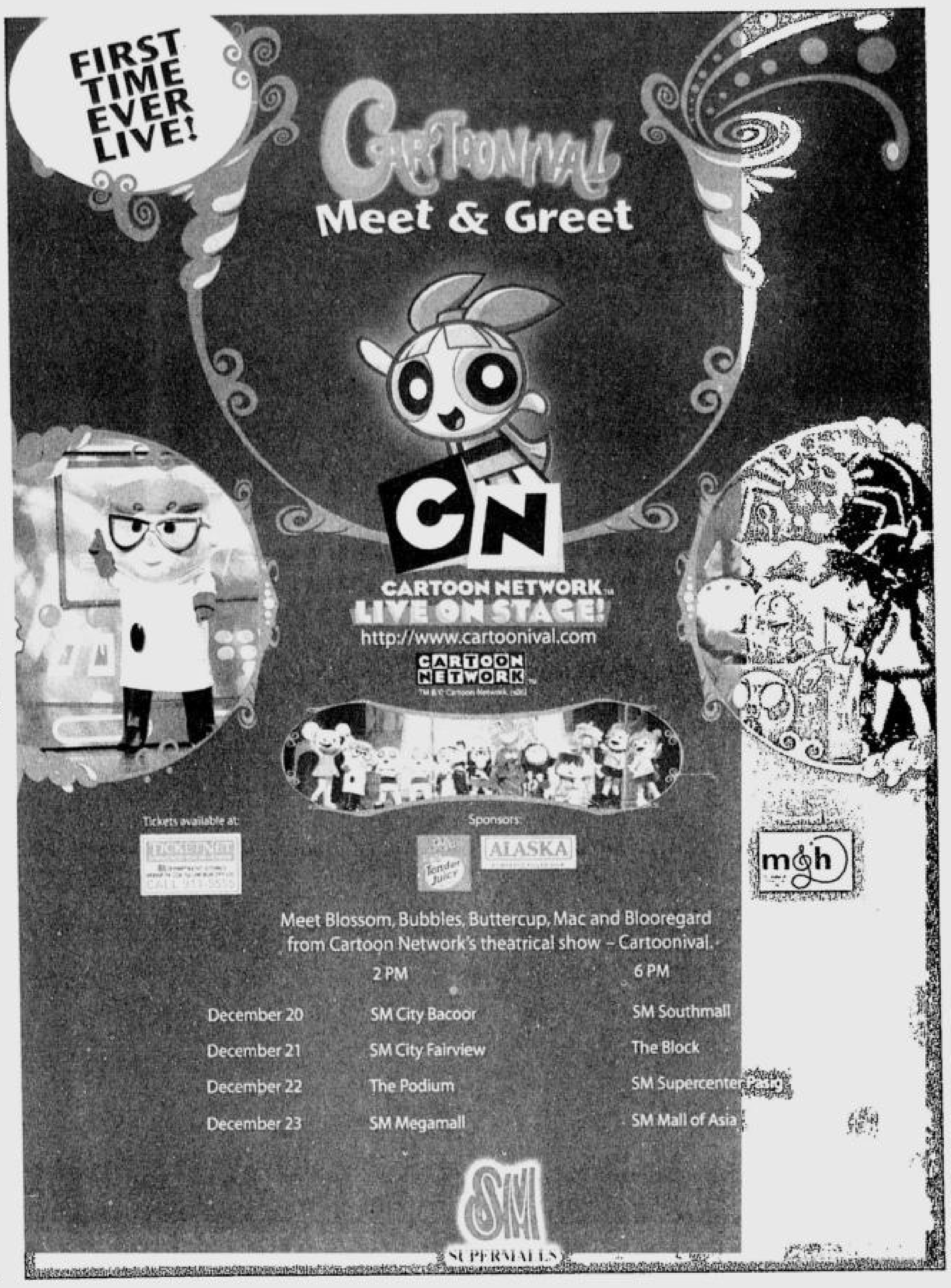
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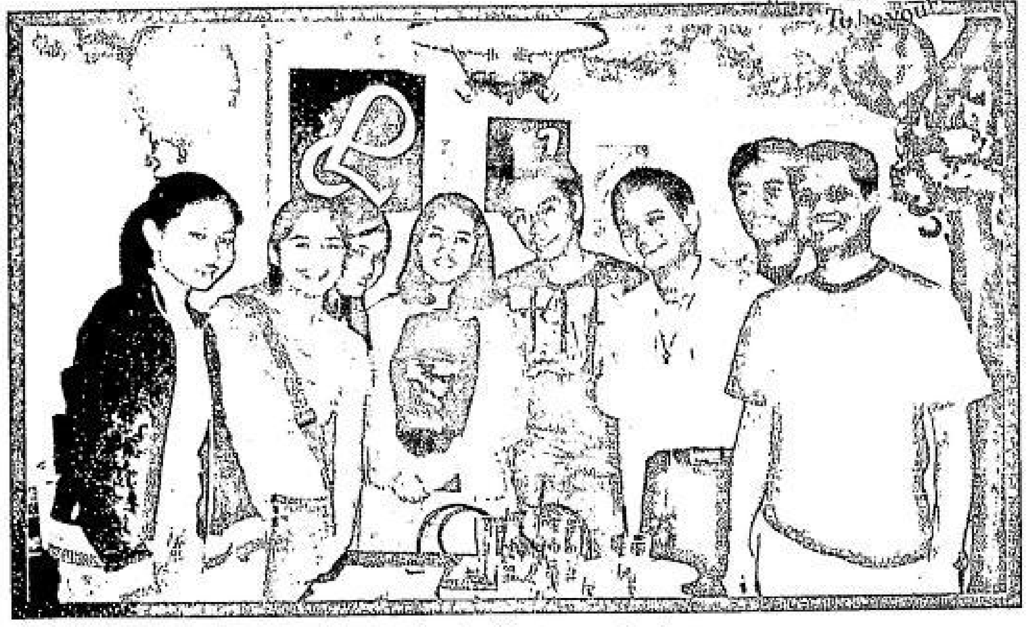
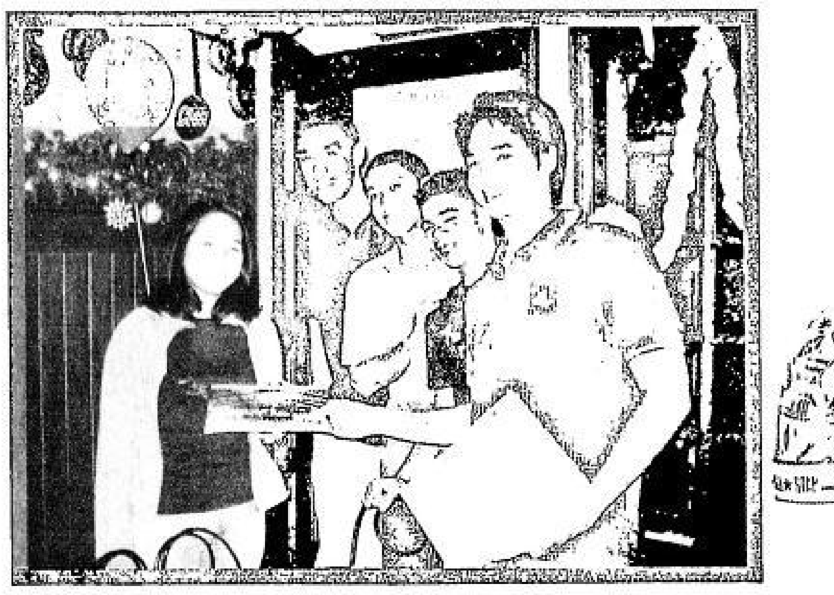


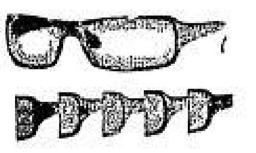
CATHERINE'S incredibly sweet friends are all in to surprise her.



THE ATENEO Blue Eagles hands the birthday girl an autographed team photo.

NEW pair of Converse sneakers for Catherine

Eye-catching designs from The Legend



NEW RB 4075

Ray-ban, the world's leading eyewear brand and global leader in the sector has presented their summer collection. Some of the most sought after styles this year were the new updated aviators (RB3237) in Gunmetal with its larger, wrap-style and the new rectangular, retro-style plastics (RB4075). Following this trend, Ray-ban now has the new aviator inspired RB3277 and RB3279 from the Japanese collection with light colored lenses in metal frame. All models in the Ray-ban collection are the product of meticulous, original styling that translates the best of the latest contemporary trends into an ever-contemporary look for millions of Ray-ban wearers around the world. The Sun collection stands out in particular for its fashion inspired models as well as for the original color that made Ray-ban a legend in the industry. All models are identified by the Ray-ban signature engraved or silkscreen-printed on the arms and stamped on the lenses.

Together with these new collection, Ray-ban has announced its continous partnership with the Honda Racing F1 Team. Ray-ban's partnership with the team has proved to be a powerful medium for promoting the brand's iconic identity. In the Philippines, Ray-ban has taken this global direction and partnered with the Philippine Touring Car Championship that had it's culminating championship race last November 25 - 26 at the Subic International Raceway. Continuing it's tradition and reinvention, Ray-ban has announced the inclusion of the original Wayfarers for the Summer 2007 collection. Ray-ban Wayfarer designed and crafted the original version from every point of view and would be available in the Philippines by April 2007.

Check the new collection before January 31, 2007 & get your 2nd pair for a steal price! Inquire at all Department stores & Leading optical shops for details on the It's a Steal promo.

Birthday high

From page D1

in rage when they lost last season.") and of Converse sneakers.

Since my younger brother Chris is part of the Ateneo Blue Eagles. I showed him Mrs. Bella's e-mail; he was really moved by it and was more than willing to help. He rounded up several of his teammates to come join in on the surprise and also took the initiative to print out their team photo and got everyone—players, coaches, staff—to sign for Catherine.

INQUIRER 2bU! also contacted Jake Ramirez to help us out with the Converse sneakers. The amicabic fellow that he is, he agreed to sponsor the shoes—personally. (Of course we chose blue so she could wear them to all the Blue Eagles games!)

So the big day finally rolled around. I told the boys to wait outside first while I walked into the Old Spaghetti House on Katipunan for the introductions. I was met by Chieney, Catherine's best friend and roommate, whom I had been coordinating.

I told Catherine I was from 2bU! and that her mom had written to us to help her celebrate her birthday.

Catherine was surprised, "Thank you!" she exclaimed with a smile. I handed her the box of shoes: "This is my first surprise," I said, "I have another one coming."

On cue, my brother and his teammates Emman Monfort, Yuri Escueta and Clifford Arao (Mike Baldos came a little later) all walked into the function room reserved for Catherine's birthday.

"Oh my god!" exclaimed Catherine.

The boys greeted her "happy birthday" and Chris handed her the autographed photo. We all sat down and chatted with Catherine and her friends; the Blue Eagles shared their recent experiences in Cagayan de Oro and they also talked about their studies.

We saw how excited Catherine was when she was presented a surprise video from her family and friends back home. I told her to open the box that we had given her and when she did, she shrieked with laughter.

Chieney was wearing the exact same pair! It just shows that the two were really best friends and identical in a lot of ways.

What happened next was probably the most rousing event of the evening. Catherine paused to thank 2bU! and the Ateneo Blue Eagles for coming and preparing for her birthday.

She expressed how grateful she was to her mother for planning all this, for "doing such crazy things like writing to 2bU!" just for her.

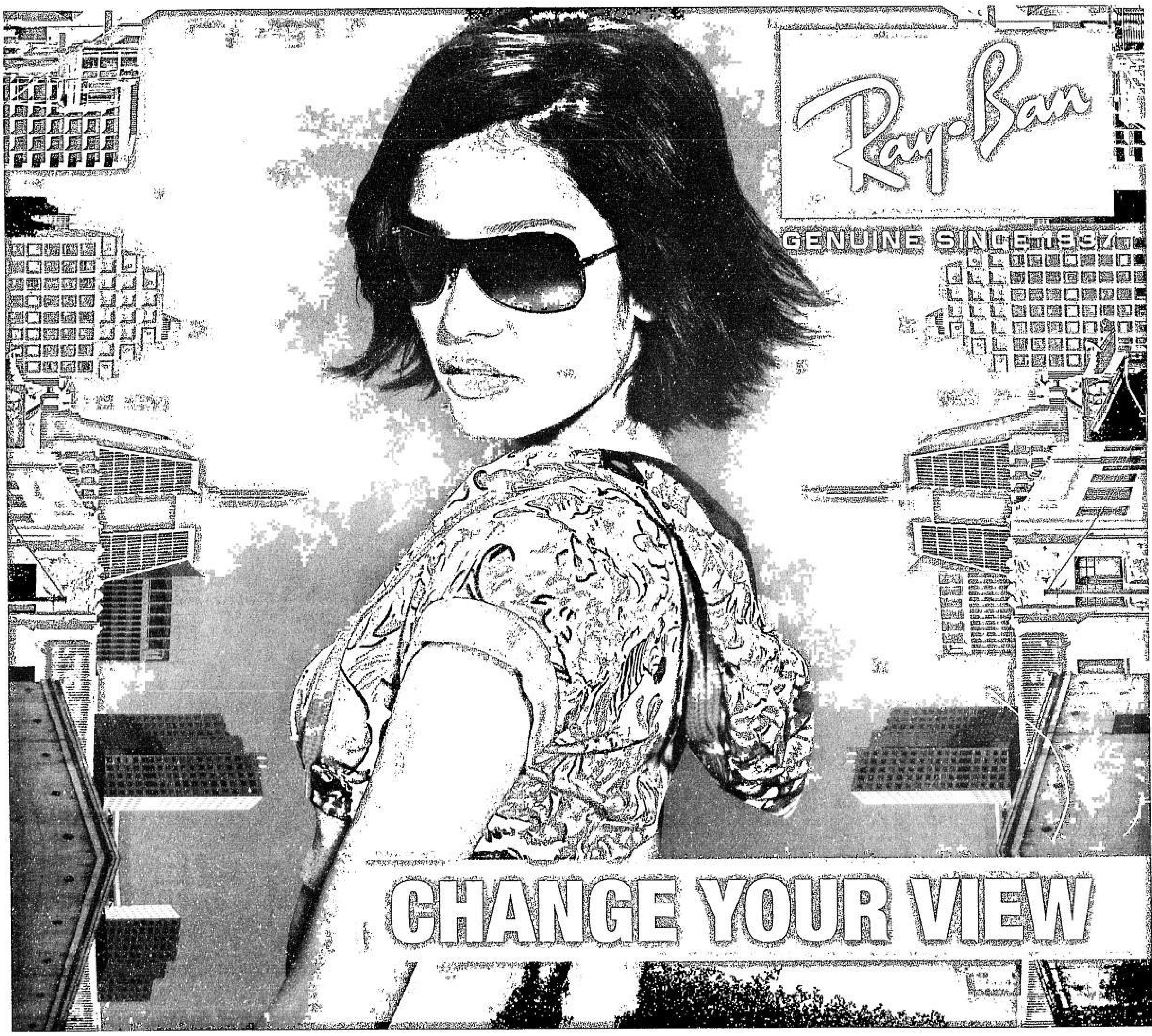
She became a little teary-eyed as she said that she might not be the best daughter in the world yet it amazed her how her parents were always going through great lengths for her.

All of us in the room were completely struck and we all just listened in silence. In the end, we applauded her and her family.

It was clearly a surprise-filled birthday for Catherine—from the dinner and video to 2bU! and the Blue Eagles. The feeling that you get when you help make someone's wish come true is overwhelming; one that totally puts you on a natural high and completes your day.

We hope that we were able to make Catherine's 18th birthday memorable because... no matter what she says, she truly deserved it all.

E-mail the author at chloe_dominique@yahoo.com



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Chatting with Chiz

A fan gets her dream fulfilled with a face-to-face chat with Sorsogon Rep. Francis Escudero

"IT WAS MORE than fun," Jowana SMSd us after.

By Leslie Ann Tan, *2bU! Correspondent*
Photos by Tammy David

GIVE ME ONE GOOD REASON why anyone should idolize a politician.

Politicians alternate between shouting and sleeping in the hallowed halls of the Batasan. They seem to accomplish little by way of passing bills. Instead, they debate the same popular issues over and over again, leaving other important bills untouched. Our GDP figures show healthy growth, yet Juan de la Cruz says he feels poorer. How's that for a conundrum?

But once in a while, a bright, young and idealistic politician emerges from the quagmire. With his proficiency in both English and Tagalog, Francis "Chiz" Escudero has been hailed as the voice of reason in the opposition. He speaks with deliberateness and clarity of thought. Chiz has got that triple-play package going for him: smart, sincere, and sexy.

Indeed, if you Google his name and explore blogs, you would find anonymous entries littered with the words *guwapo*, cute and sexy. I can only hazard a guess that these anonymous blogs are penned by both sides of the gender spectrum. Given such coverage of the voting population, this guy is predicted to be in Malacañang someday soon.

This Christmas, 2bU! received a request from Chiz's self-professed biggest fan.

"Much as I want to meet Johnny Depp in real life, I would rather receive a picture with signature from Rep. Francis Joseph Escudero. There are a number of Chizmates out there, but I am one of his biggest fans."

Meet Jowana Bueser. Jowana, 22, is in her junior year of taking up Masteral Studies in Social Work in UP Diliman. She picked social work because of its practical applications of both Sociology and Psychology. The elder of two children, Jowana relishes debating with her father on national issues. Her father is with the administration party, while she finds herself taking the side of the opposition. Here she borrows Chiz's arguments.

She is extremely impressed with Chiz's sound logic and witty rebuttals. She also likes it that Chiz is one congressman who has proposed a House bill for social workers.

Jowana's Christmas wish was to have an autographed picture of Chiz. 2bU! did one better. She got to meet him in the flesh. Chiz gamely agreed to meet up, saying, "Why don't you ask her when she's free and I'll fix my schedule."

He was that gracious. When asked afterward why he agreed to spend an afternoon with a fan, he quickly responded, "Because I can do it and it does not take anything from me really. Because I am a fan, too, in my own way in relation to some people, and because I wanted to experience it, given that this is a first for me. I only hope that I did not disap-

CHATTING/ E4

CHIZ and his biggest fan Jowana

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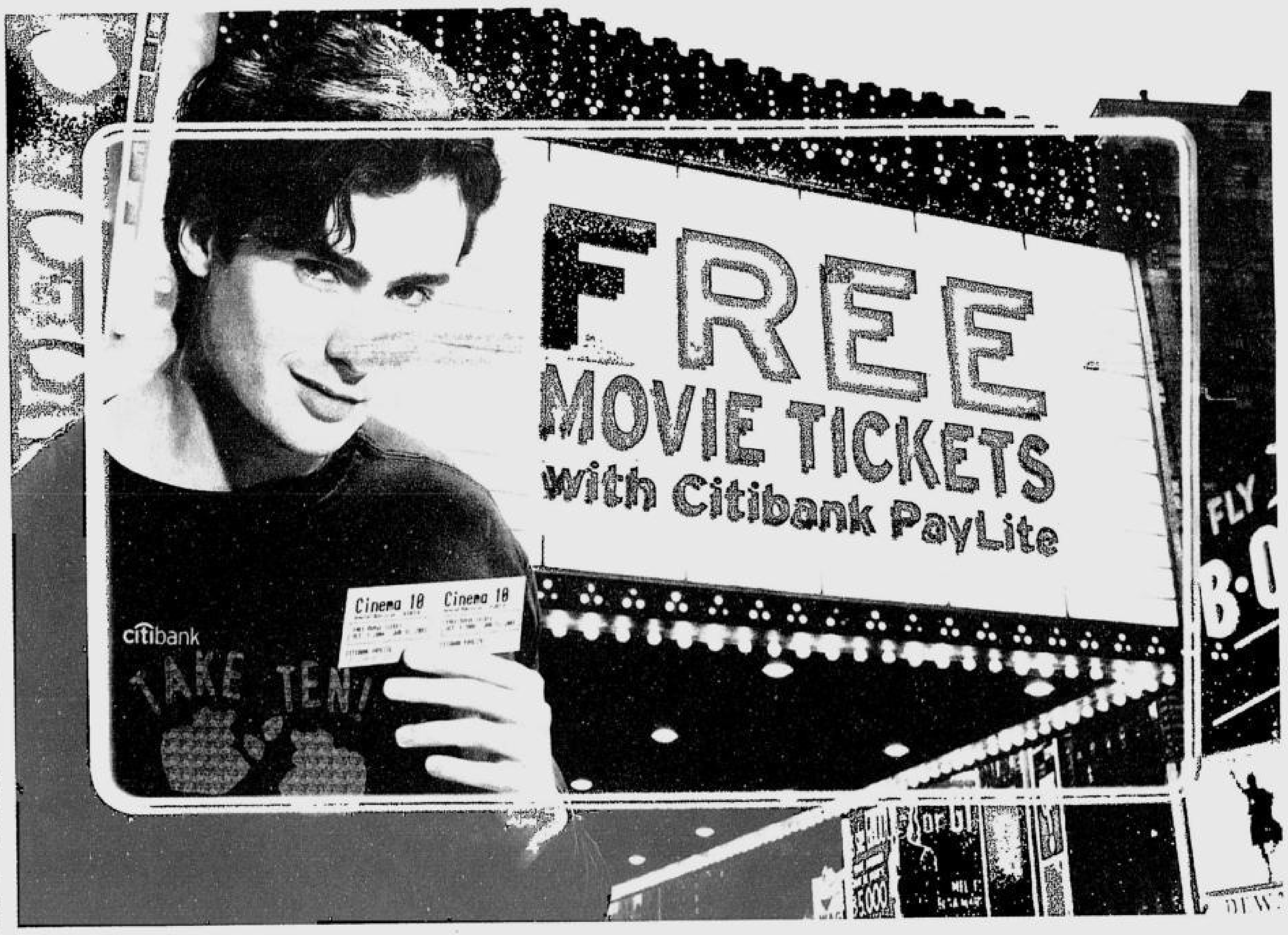

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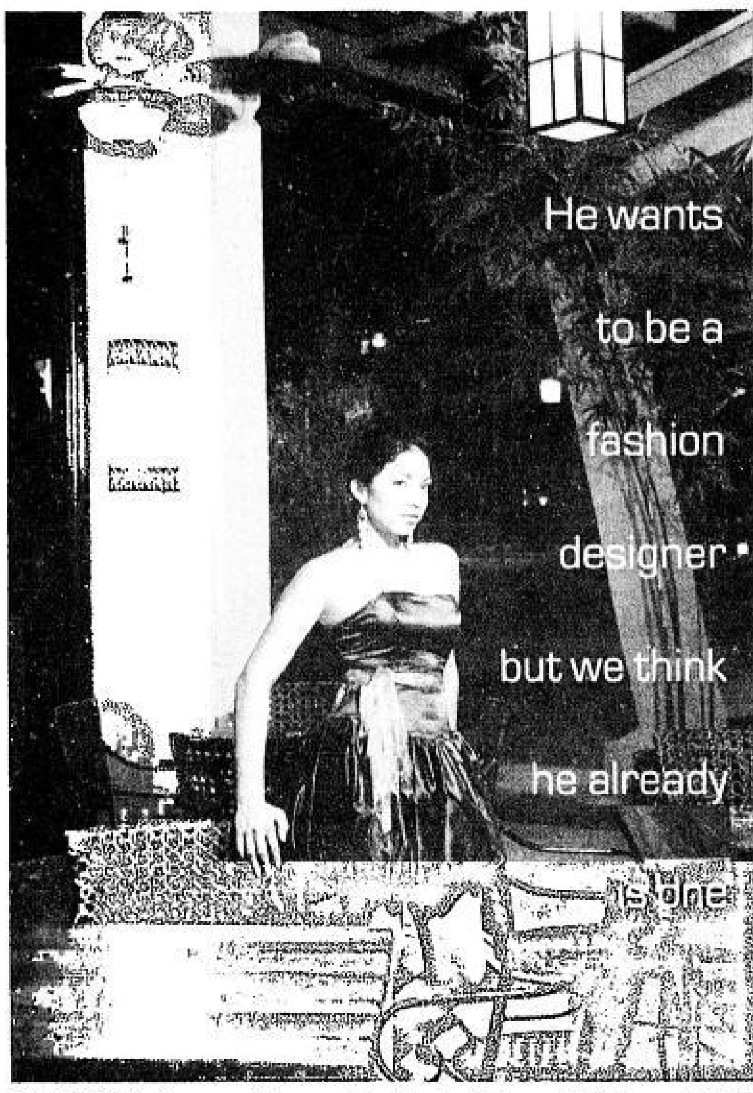
CUPCAKE princess. White bubble bustier dress embellished with buttons, P2,590

LITTLE black dress. Black stretch bustier dress, P2,490

VENUS on earth. Venus-cut dress, P2,000

Barbie-doll dreams

CAMOUFLAGE cutie. Camouflage bolero, P1,300; bubble skirt, P1,750


He wants to be a fashion designer but we think he already is one

CHARCOAL charmer. Charcoal bustier bubble cocktail dress, P3,750

Text by Pam Pastor
Photos by David Hanson
Makeup and styling by Tatin Yang

INSPIRED BY HIS MOTHER who was good at making clothes, five-year-old Abbie Abadiez stole his neighbor's Barbie doll because he wanted to make her clothes.

When his mom found out what he did, she got mad and made him return it. A family friend felt bad for little Abbie and soon, Abbie had his own Barbie doll.

Abbie's mother passed away when he was six and he continued to hand-sew clothes for his little doll—it was his way of keeping her memory alive.

When he graduated from grade school, he started working as a sewer for a factory of bloomers. "My first earning was P120. I used half of it to buy things for my stepsister."

He started working in fast-food chains—he had stints in Jollibee and Chowking—but his passion for fashion continued to grow.

"*Kahit may trabaho na ako, pumapasok ako sa* factory *para makapanahi*," he said. Abbie used to take the graveyard shift in factories in his desire to sew.

After a strange (and fortunate) turn of events, Abbie ended up working in Samsung as a PR assistant to Angie Limbaco. His new boss soon discovered his talent for making clothes. His clothes are fun and wearable—with interesting details that make a statement.

"He started bringing clothes that he'd make for friends who would join beauty pageants. Soon, we were asking him to sew clothes for us. I think he has the talent."

Angie believes in his talent so much that she has decided to finance him, sending him to school at the Fashion Institute of the Philippines and helping him purchase materials. "He has the drive but he needs support. He just needs someone to guide him. Some people are born rich but if they're not guided, it will all go to waste. I believe that just like a singer gets her break with one song, all Abbie needs is one break," Angie said.

We'd like to do our part in giving Abbie his break.

We put together a special shoot for Abbie at Serendra Bonifacio High Street. His chosen model was Vera Eumee Reiter, the reigning Mutya ng Pilipinas Tourism International.

Abbie says his greatest dream "is to become a fashion designer." We think he already is one—and the rest of the country needs to know as much.

Call Abbie at 0920-2338231 or 6551677 or e-mail abbie_xtin12@yahoo.com.

Future prom queen

Text by Bianca Consunji
2bU! Correspondent
Photos by Jesse Herrera

WHEN WE GOT JAMILA Anne Leosala's letter, we couldn't resist granting her wish.

She said, "I'm a high school junior at University of Santo Tomas, and I'm currently in search of the perfect prom essentials. I know it's a bit early, but since it's my first-ever prom, I'm really excited about the dress, the makeup, and, of course, the date."

She continued, "I really want that night to be perfect. Will you be able to help me get a beautiful dress and nice makeup?"

"The theme of our prom is royalty, but I don't know how I should go about it," she said.

To jumpstart her pre-prom preparations (and because we believe that every girl should enjoy her prom) 2bU! asked help from makeup artist Tatin Yang, designer Aby Puzon and Azta Urban Salon to help Jamila get ready for her big night.

For Jamila's trial makeup, Tatin decided to use bright colors in order to make her look princessy and fresh at the same time.

TATIN Yang working her magic

STYLIST Cris at work

"Her favorite color is purple, which is great for the royalty theme, so I paired that color with a jewel green eyeline," Tatin said. "I decided to use bright colors to bring out her skin tone."

To complement the makeup, Azta senior hairstylist Cris Evangelista gave Jamila a half ponytail and curled the loose sections of her hair.

"It's prettier than a full bun, and the curls make her look young and fresh," he explained.

Young designer Aby Puzon will be working on a prom gown for Jamila.

"Lots of people will be wearing pink, so I'd like a violet gown with a full skirt to go with the royalty theme," Jamila said. Aby set a schedule to take Jamila's measurements and to fully plan the gown in time for the prom.

"I'm really excited for my prom now," Jamila said. "I loved the makeup Tatin did on me, the colors looked good. The curls Cris did on me looked so cute! And I can't wait to see my dress. I really want that night to be a blast, and having so many people help me plan it is amazing."

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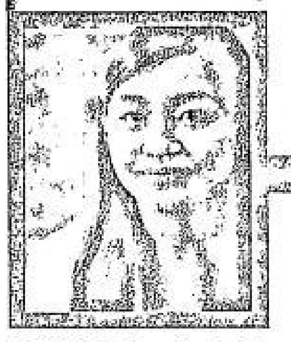
JAMILA before the trial hair and makeup

E-mail the author at biancaconsunji
hoo.com

Contact Tatin Yang at http://www.fl
com/photos/tatinyang/

Mission: makeover

READY for her close-up

Text by Bianca Consunji
2bU! Correspondent
Photos by Sara Black

I THINK THAT AT LEAST ONCE in her life, every girl needs to experience getting glammed up by top stylists and makeup artists, and having ace photographers make her look like she's never been plain a day in her life," said 20-year-old Shai Lagarde, who sent us an e-mail with her wish to model for 2bU!.

When we first saw Shai, an editorial assistant for a teen magazine, our first thought was that she definitely didn't need a makeover. However, she explained, "It's the season for parties and family reunions, so I wanted to learn how to pull off a holiday chic look—a far cry from my usual plain tank top, jeans and flats. I thought it would be great to be made over and given tips by the pros."

LAST-MINUTE touches on Shai by the hairstylist

Lancôme makeup artist Gela Laurel opted to do Shai's makeup in light, pretty colors.

"To bring out her features, I used natural shades to make her glow without being overpowered by the makeup," Gela said. Hairstylist Chris Cadagat from Basecut Salon Libis curled Shai's hair and added volume at the roots to give Shai a more feminine look.

BEFORE

For the shoot, we asked Shai to wear a paisley-print fuchsia dress from Karimadon (which has some of the prettiest ready-to-wear dresses) and a colorful beaded necklace. During the shoot, photographer and occasional model Sara Black directed Shai and gave her tips on posing for photos.

Shai said, "I was really excited when I learned it was Sara Black who was going to photograph me. I heard from people who have worked with her that Sara's good at making her subjects feel comfortable in front of the camera, and I was lucky enough to experience that firsthand."

Shai, who initially seemed, well, shy, eventually warmed up and started chatting with everyone in sight. By the time it was her turn to face the camera, she seemed confident enough to toss back her head and smile. After

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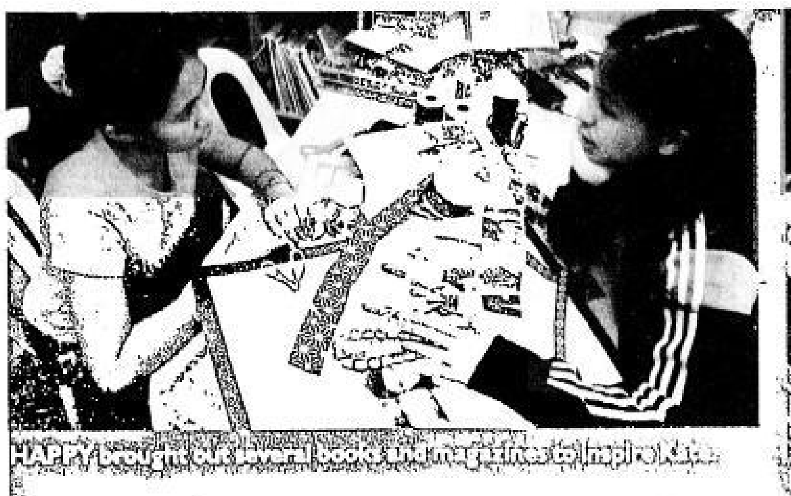
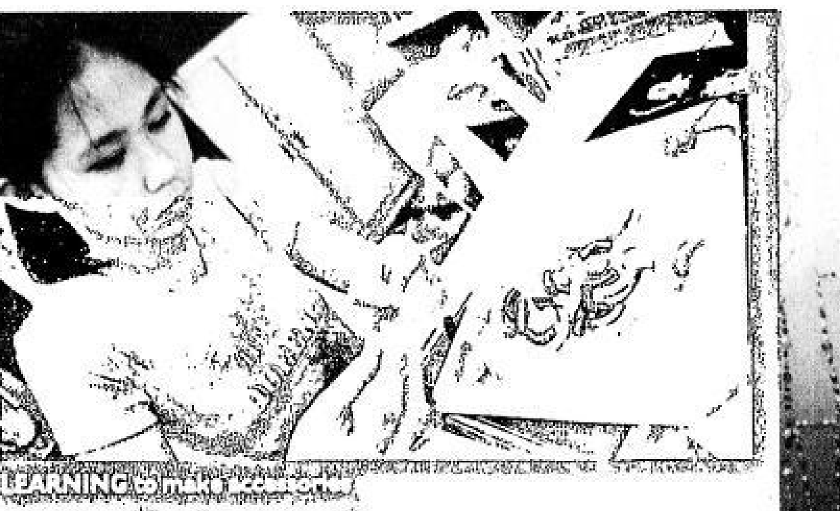


HAPPY brought out several books and magazines to inspire Kate.



LEARNING to make accessories

Happy to be of help to budding designer

AN EARLY Christmas gift from Happy—a book titled "Jewelry Making for Fun and Profit"

A bead hobbyist gets some tips in the accessories trade from a hotshot designer

Text by Niño Mark M. Sablan
2bU! Correspondent
Photos by Tammy David

CHRISTMAS IS A TIME FOR GENEROsity, sharing and gift-giving. We still have a week to go before Christmas, but accessory designers Happy David and Kate Villarin said they felt the true essence of Christmas last week.

Kate is 16 years old and because she usually has a lot of time in her hands, she ends up making simple accessories every day. When she was able to sell several pieces to family and friends, she realized she could actually do this big time.

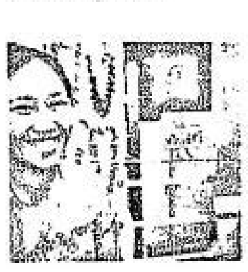
This is where 2bU! came in to the rescue. To help Kate with her accessory business, we had the perfect Santa in mind: Happy David, owner and designer of hip accessory line Get Happy (and also a former 2bU! correspondent!).

Last week, we brought Kate to the designer's Get Happy store at the second floor of Independent Lifestyles Area at the Power Plant mall. While checking out the items, Happy briefed Kate about branding, the importance of merchandising, the basics of customer service and marketing one's products.

After the business talk, the two then walked over to Happy's workshop, which was just a stone's throw from Rockwell. There Kate saw an abundance of materials and "happy workers" endlessly stringing, knotting, cutting and tying.

Happy gave Kate a starter kit, which included beads, components, findings and tools. After being taught beading and Jewelry-making 101 by Happy and assistant Melanie, Kate churned out a pair of earrings, a necklace and a bracelet.

Happy also gifted Kate with a jewelry stand for her own creations, plus a book called "Jewelry Making for Fun and Profit" so she could further her knowledge.



HAPPY also gifted Kate with a jewelry stand for her own creations.

There's no doubt that Kate enjoyed and learned a lot from the crash course. Happy emphasized the importance of learning how to put things together by exposing your eyes to various designs and inspiration. She also taught Kate how to do mood boards to serve as inspiration when creating or planning collections.

The greatest lesson Kate learned that afternoon was all about creativity. "You must be creative in making accessories, like using different materials apart from beads," she says. "You must also have your own style so people would easily recognize your creations."

The first time Happy saw Kate that afternoon, she recognized the simple beaded bracelet that the teener was wearing. "Those were the exact same things I did when I was beginning since it was the most basic!" Happy exclaims. And look at where she is now.

Armed with determination, creativity and an eye for beauty, Kate might just make it big in the accessories business one of these days. And when she makes it big and has enough money, maybe she can go back to school. And after school—she plans to take up Fine Arts—she can go full blast with her accessories business.

E-mail the author at marksablan_2bu@yahoo.com

Miracle comes to the rescue of an allowance-saving grandson

Perfume wishes

NINETEEN-YEAR-OLD IZRAEL LACson wanted a special Christmas gift for his grandma who has been helping take care of him and his two brothers. His grandma's favorite perfume is Lancôme's Miracle.

"I've tried saving my allowance but I don't think I'll make it," he said.

We called Zerl Chan, L'Oreal Philippines' group product manager for Lancôme, who found the story sweet. "That's so cute," she said.

And to help Izrael surprise his grandma on Christmas, she sent not just a bottle of perfume, but a special Miracle gift set, which included a body lotion and a bath and shower gel.

Grandma will be very happy and surprised. Let's just hope she doesn't read the paper today.

Pam Pastor

A date with Dennis

BEING A FAN IS FUN. AND SO we always knew that our rescues would include having fans meet their favorite personalities.

Dear Paloy,
Let's have coffee soon!
Dennis

Rowena La Torre wrote to us about her newly married friend Paloy, who is a big fan of Dennis Trillo.

"I would be very, very delighted—and I know my friend will be, too—if she gets to meet him in person. But if that would be too much trouble I know she'll appreciate a taped message or even an autographed picture."

Weng is frustrated that despite working at GMA 7, she couldn't help Paloy meet her favorite actor.

We haven't met Dennis either, but we know people who know him.

We called Chris Cahilig, publicist of Nescafé, which Dennis endorses. Chris was excited about the idea—but because Paloy was away on her honeymoon while we were preparing for this issue, we had to postpone their coffee date.

Paloy, thank Weng. Because you have a coffee date with Dennis in January.

Pam Pastor

ai Lagarde,
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a series of shots, Sara
ed Shai the photos.
hoa...' was all I could say
I saw the photos," Shai said.
lly liked the makeup and the
we achieved for the shoot,
he fact that I got to model a
look. The whole experience
ads of fun!"

MODEL for a day
Shai Lagarde

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Chatting with Chiz

From page E1

point in any way."

Disappoint he certainly didn't.

So on a Saturday afternoon, we didn't feel like we were talking to the Honorable Representative from the first district of Sorsogon. Instead, it felt like we were in the company of a very articulate, very engaging and very knowledgeable friend. All topics were on the table. We talked about eBay ("the weirdest item reportedly auctioned is a half-eaten sandwich by Britney Spears") and Angelina Jolie ("not that pretty"). He is obviously a gadgets man, up to date with the latest camera equipment. He was also raving about a Nokia E50 ("just P15,000!").

Chiz recounted his days in UP, from his interview with a panel of judges during law school, to being part of a fraternity, to his student number. He said he just barely passed his academics in elementary and college, but excelled in law school. He claimed that apart from the required schoolbooks, he had read only 10 other books. *"Hindi ako palabasa."*

He then started giving us a synopsis of his favorite books, like "Dinner with a Perfect Stranger." Wow, this guy could definitely spin a story. Little wonder that he gets his message across, whether it be a book summary or the nation's most talked-about issues.

When we asked about political *chismis*, he gamely talked about a couple of his colleagues and poked fun at some. We asked him how he can fire away in straight sentences. *"Pag nauubusan ka na ng Ingles, mag-*Tagalog *ka. Pag nauubusan ka na ng* Tagalog, *e di mag-Ingles ka."*

He also said that despite his face-offs with Mike Defensor on TV, they are good friends. A real gentleman, he stopped short of any personal stabs.

As a child, said Chiz, his dream was to become president. As he was sitting through his law school interview, he was asked the same question, but he answered in the negative. We asked him if he still had the same dream. *"Libre naman mangarap,"* he replied.

Chiz was the perfect host, talking and listening in equal measure. For Jowana, Chiz represented an inspiration for her to be more politically aware and discerning. In her blog, she proudly posted afterward, "I did not feel, and he did not make me feel, that he was a politician."

True enough, Chiz wasn't out there to win votes. He didn't give us any official party lines. No agenda. None of the trappings of a traditional politician. He was a regular guy having coffee with a bunch of girls on a lazy Saturday afternoon.

When we ended, he was careful not to leave any part of his blueberry cupcake unfinished, probably afraid that it would find its way to eBay.

Party favors

By Pam Pastor

VOLUNTEERS FROM THE INQUIRER, Hands On Manila's Breakfast Club, Snackenistas, Merienda Mates and Childhope Foundation Asia have been holding a Christmas party for around 45 streets kids from Guadalupe, the CCP Complex and Quezon City every year for five years now.

Days before the party, we received an e-mail from Chito de la Vega.

"This year, aside from the usual street kids from the CCP Complex and Guadalupe, we will also be inviting street kids from Sucat Road. *Sana maraming mag-*volunteer *maging Kuya* or *Ate*. It will be a different experience to talk and share a few hours with these kids. You will learn a lot from them. They will change the way you look at life."

He listed other things needed for the party, including food, drinks and loot bags for the kids.

So many generous hearts helped make the street kids' party special that the goodies overflowed

We immediately sprang into action—we called friends from Shakey's, Unilever and Jack 'n Jill and they all responded positively.

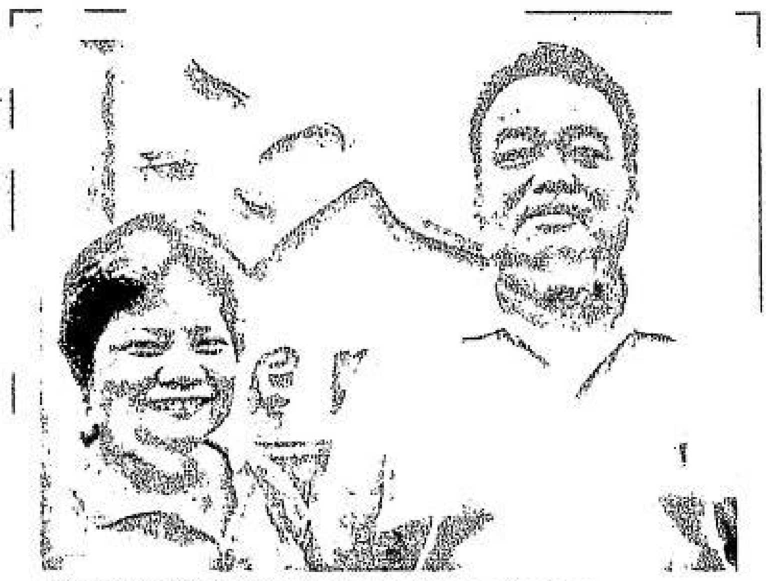
On the big day, thanks to Margaret Jose, marketing manager, and Coochy Mamaclay, brand manager, Shakey's prepared 20 boxes of large pizzas. Evan Panganiban of Unilever sent goodie bags stuffed with their products. With the help of Dennis Heruela, Jack 'n Jill sent yummy snacks for the kids.

EUGENE ARANETA

IT WAS a day of fun not just for the kids.

But because there are so many generous hearts inside and outside the INQUIRER who also did their part in making the kids' day special, the goodies overflowed.

Some were taken home by the kids (each child left with a huge bag of goodies) while others were saved to be given away in other celebrations for street kids that would also be held this month.



MOVED TO TEARS. Geronima and Ireneo Petalver

Spa surprise for mom and dad

By Arlene M. Paredes
2bU! Correspondent

CLEARLY PUZZLED AND in doubt whether they got the address right, Mr. and Mrs. Petalver walked into the Terra Wellness Spa at Discovery Suites in Ortigas not knowing what to expect. They knew who to look for, but they were clueless why they had to be there. Well, isn't that what surprises are all about?

Eighteen-year-old Jen Petalver casually asked her parents the previous night to drop by at the Terra Spa, without divulging any more details. When her parents asked, she only said, "Basta."

"Basta," in fact, was a touching story that would move Mrs. Petalver to tears.

Terra Spa general manager Nino Sinco and operations manager Angie Castillo welcomed the Petalver couple and explained to them the special treat awaiting them that day. The couple would receive a 90-minute rejuvenating Terra's Touch (Swedish massage) session in a private couple's room, courtesy of their daughter—much to their surprise.

Jen read about the wishes being granted by 2bU! to the Rescue, and decided she would make a wish not for herself but for her loving parents who always granted her her own wishes, prompting her siblings to tease her as the family's spoiled brat, or the one who always got special treatment.

In fact, she was going to celebrate her 18th birthday with a traditional debut celebration a day after her parents' massage. But as the youngest of five children, Jen was ready to disprove that she was a spoiled kid. She asked 2bU!'s help to give her parents some pampering, and got it.

Ireneo Petalver, 52, and his wife Geronima, 53, both work in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, as hospital assistants. They lift patients from one hospital bed to another as part of anaesthesia procedures. Mr. Petalver has been in the same job for 25 years, while Mrs. Petalver joined her husband 10 years ago. They were here for vacation, for Jen's birthday and for the holiday season, all in one blow.

The couple's jobs obviously require a lot of physical strength. Mrs. Petalver said she had often felt pain and discomfort in her upper back area, while Mr. Petalver often complained of lower back pains. Despite the discomfort, however, it never occurred to the couple to give themselves much-needed treatment since they were just too busy.

At Terra Spa, located at the 4th floor of Discovery Suites, the Petalver couple finally enjoyed being at the receiving end of pampering and caring hands.

"Sarap," said Mrs. Petalver of the experience. *"Atsaka ang galing nila... pati pag-*cover *sa 'yo, maingat sila."*

"Exciting *na*, I don't know. First time *kong ma-*treat *ng ganito,"* Mr. Petalver added.

Terra Spa's masseurs are all licensed physical therapists with certificates from the Department of Health. They also trained with Kathleen Moynihan-Rodrigo of the Spa Association of the Philippines.

The spa also allows their clients freedom to choose not only their treatment, but the music to accompany their stay at the spa. Two catalogues were presented to the Petalver couple: the catalogue for oils and the catalogue for music. Mrs. Petalver personally picked the spiritual iPod for their treatment's background music.

When asked about what they would like to tell their daughter Jen, Mrs. Petalver said they didn't expect Jen to pull off a touching surprise like this.

*"Hindi namin ini-*expect. *Kasi sabi ng mga kapatid niya,* spoiled *siya kasi bunso,"* Mrs. Petalver said, teary-eyed.

Before they left, they promised to share the experience with their other children. Now, Jen has redefined "special treatment" for this family.

Terra Wellness Spa offers body massages, facials, bodyworks, foot massages, and stand-alone treatments (i.e. quantum chakra clearing). Special promo packages are still available for the Holiday season. Located at 4/F, Discovery Suites, 25 ADB Ave., Ortigas Center, Pasig City. Call (02) 6382977.

E-mail the author at lhenparedes@gmail.com

DJ Benny Benassi live in Manila

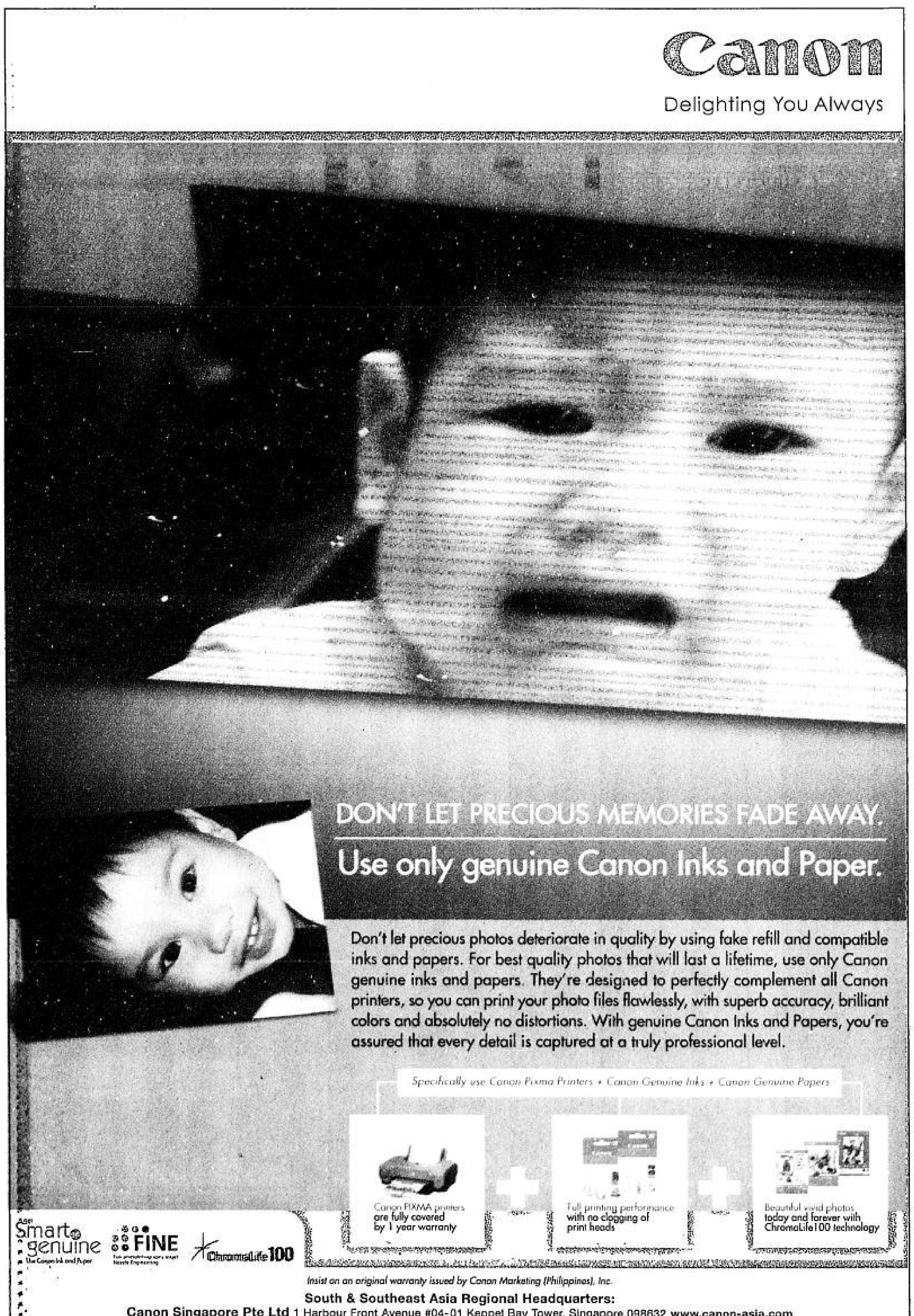
HOT INTERNATIONAL DJ Benny Benassi conquered the dance floor with the house anthem "Satisfaction." Now he's set to take Manila by storm Dec. 29 at the PICC Forum.

Ranked No. 13 in thedjlist.com, the Italian musician has worked as a producer in collaboration with his cousin Alle Benassi. Their first club hit was "I Feel So Fine" by KMC feat Dhany, in 2001. This was followed by the "Benny Benassi Presents The Biz Project," a ground-breaking mixture of electro, techno and house.

The first single, "Satisfaction," was No. 2 in the Official Singles Sales Chart in UK, stayed for a month as No. 1 in the Official Dance Chart in France, hit the No. 2 place in the Official Dance Chart in Germany, and conquered the Top 20 and Top 40 of the Official Singles Sales Chart in France and Official Singles Sales Chart in Germany, respectively. The album "Hypnotica" stayed in the Top 20 in the Official Album Sales Chart in France for over a month and reached Top 5.

In 2003, Benassi's work was No. 1 in the Top 100 dance tracks on the Ministry of Sound Internet radio, DJ MAG Tune of the Year in UK, Revelation of the Year in the Italian Dance Music Awards, Dance Revelation of the Year in the Danish Music Awards, and was nominated for International Revelation of the Year in NRJ Awards in France. The following year, he had three nominations at Dancestar, Miami, and won the Best Video Award, was No. 18 (the highest new entry) in the DJ Mag Favorite DJ Poll Top 100, and received the European Border Breakers Award for "Hypnotica," the Italian album that sold most in Europe outside Italy.

Call 7181311-13 or 0920-9544244.



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To be you

PATRICIA, Akelle and Philippine music legend RJ Jacinto

In the true spirit of the holidays, a thoughtful girlfriend asks for stuff for her boyfriend instead of herself

Day of wishes

Text by Bianca Consunji
2bU! Correspondent
Photos by Rudy Esperas and Alanah Torralba

DECEMBER, NOT April, is the cruelest month: It is the time when the latest gadgets and bright new trinkets are proudly displayed in store windows alongside snowflakes and tinsel, taunting those who could only look at them through a glass pane.

For some, the month of December is an adventure. People post wish lists on their blogs, children write epic letters to Santa Claus, and friends kid each other about the gifts they want to get for Christmas.

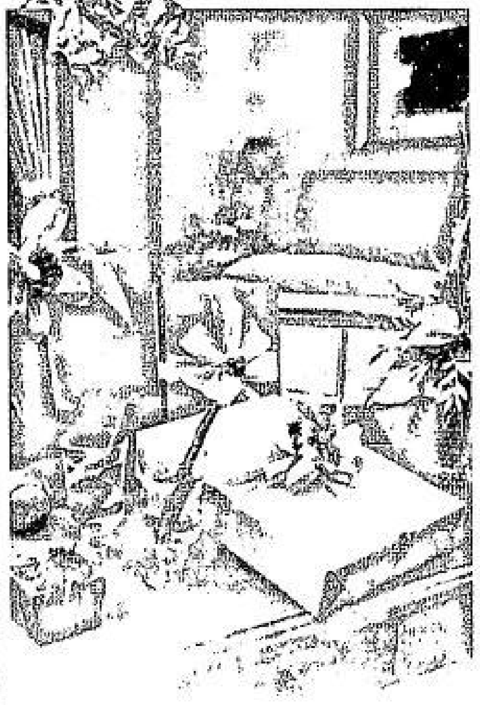
However, there are some who have other more pressing concerns, and we saw this through the e-mails we received for 2bU! to the Rescue. While we got letters from people asking for cell phones, cameras and even laptops, we also received mail from people who only wanted to make their loved ones happy.

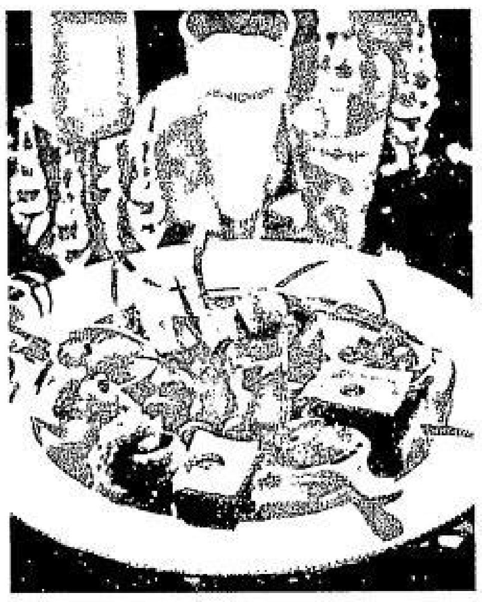
One such reader was Patricia de Leon, who said, "I have to admit there are so many things that I want, but when it comes to things I need, my mind goes blank. There's nothing much a person really needs more than God, love, family, friends, food, clothing, shelter, education and

DAY/ F4

SHARING an affectionate moment

VIVIAN Sarabia helps Akelle pick the right frames.





The Season's Vibrant Hues
at THE RICHMONDE HOTEL

Immerse yourself in the glow of the Yuletide season as you make the Richmonde your haven for the holidays.

HOLIDAY BUFFETS
A merry celebration awaits one and all at The Richmonde Grill with its overflowing buffet of classic holiday dishes.

CHRISTMAS EVE DINNER and CHRISTMAS DAY LUNCH BUFFETS at PhP 975+++.

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NEW YEAR'S EVE BASH
Count down to 2007 at the Exchange Bar from 9 pm until midnight for only PhP 500 net with unlimited drinks, a cocktail buffet and dazzling entertainment from multi-talented Girl Valencia.

CHRISTMAS ROOM PACKAGES
15 DECEMBER 2006 to 14 JANUARY 2007
Rates start at PhP 2,800 ++ for an overnight stay, with second and succeeding nights at PhP 2,500 ++.
New Year's Eve room rates at PhP 3,600++ up.
A hearty buffet breakfast, hotel discounts, vouchers from SM Ice Skating Rink and SM Bowling Center plus scheduled shuttle service are included.

FESTIVE REVELRIES
Host Yuletide get-togethers with style and ease with the Richmonde's Christmas Party Packages.
Inquire about the Happy Hour Party Packages at the Exchange Bar starting at PhP 8,500 net for 20 persons and the Banquet Party Packages starting at PhP 23,500 net for 25 persons.

SWEETS and TREATS at the LOBBY CAFÉ
Divine and luscious goodies all sprinkled with love and holiday cheer are available in shiny Christmas packaging until January 1, 2007.

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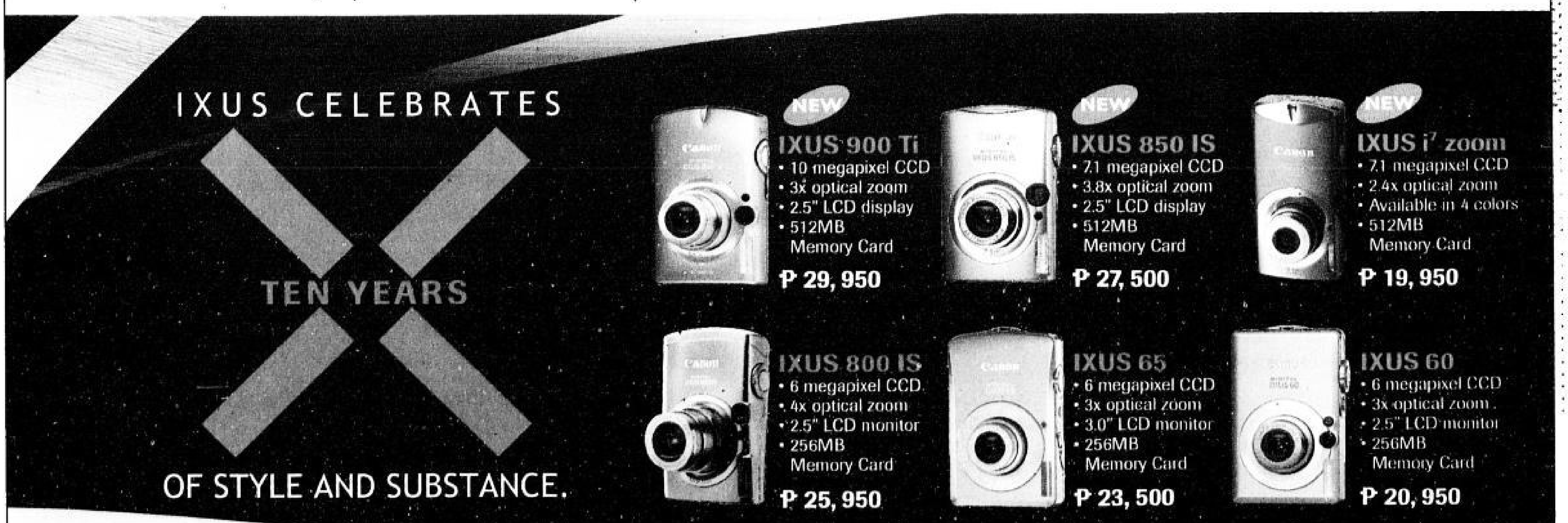
Utell



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• 3x optical zoom
• 3.0" LCD monitor
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• 3x optical zoom
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Insist on an original warranty issued by Canon Marketing (Philippines), Inc.
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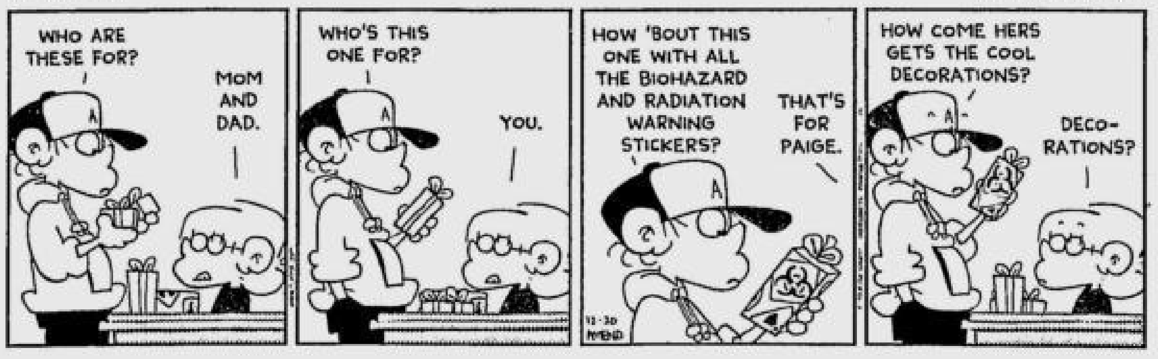
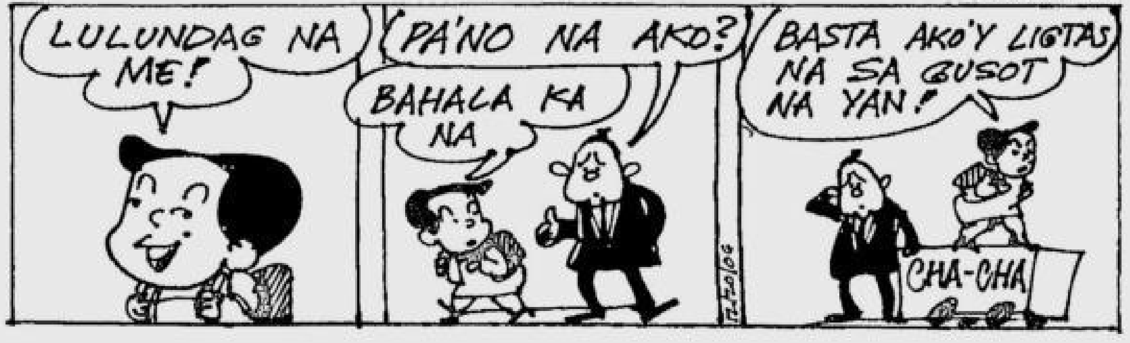
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


WHO ARE THESE FOR?
MOM AND DAD.
WHO'S THIS ONE FOR?
YOU.
HOW 'BOUT THIS ONE WITH ALL THE BIOHAZARD AND RADIATION WARNING STICKERS?
THAT'S FOR PAIGE.
HOW COME HERS GETS THE COOL DECORATIONS?
DECO-RATIONS?

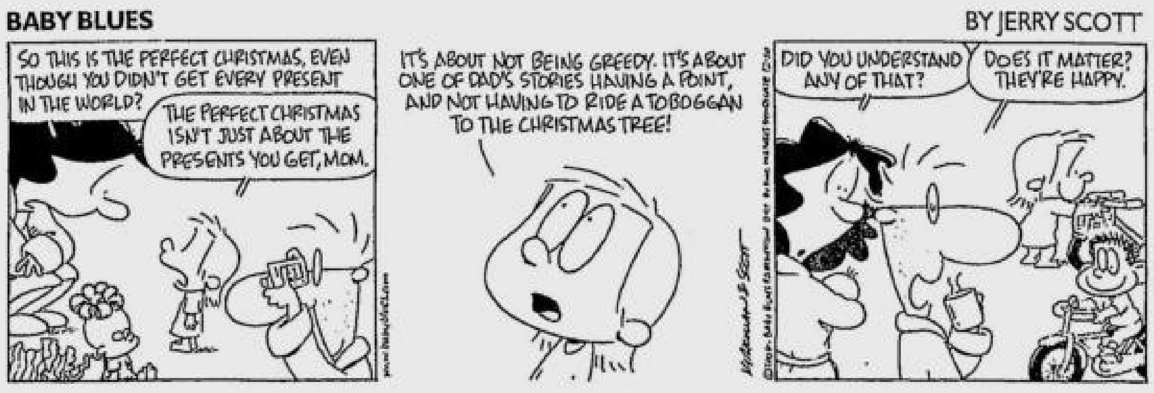
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


LULUNDAG NA ME!
PA'NO NA AKO?
BAHALA KA NA
BASTA AKO'Y LIGTAS NA SA GUSOT NA YAN!
CHA-CHA

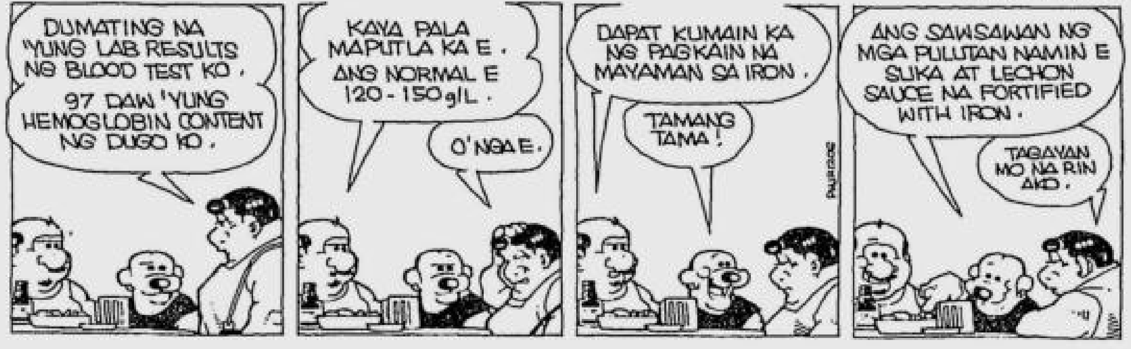
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


SO THIS IS THE PERFECT CHRISTMAS, EVEN THOUGH YOU DIDN'T GET EVERY PRESENT IN THE WORLD?
THE PERFECT CHRISTMAS ISN'T JUST ABOUT THE PRESENTS YOU GET, MOM.
IT'S ABOUT NOT BEING GREEDY. IT'S ABOUT ONE OF DAD'S STORIES HAVING A POINT, AND NOT HAVING TO RIDE A TOBOGGAN TO THE CHRISTMAS TREE!
DID YOU UNDERSTAND ANY OF THAT?
DOES IT MATTER? THEY'RE HAPPY.

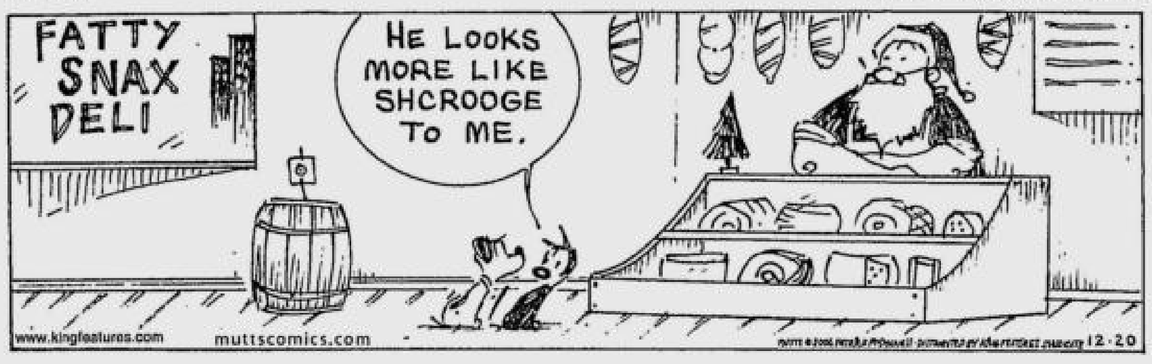
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


DUMATING NA 'YUNG LAB RESULTS NG BLOOD TEST KO. 97 DAW 'YUNG HEMOGLOBIN CONTENT NG DUGO KO.
KAYA PALA MAPUTLA KA E. ANG NORMAL E 120-150g/L.
O'NGA E.
DAPAT KUMAIN KA NG PAGKAIN NA MAYAMAN SA IRON.
TAMANG TAMA!
ANG SAWSAWAN NG MGA PULUTAN NAMIN E SUKA AT LECHON SAUCE NA FORTIFIED WITH IRON.
TAGAYAN MO NA RIN AKO.

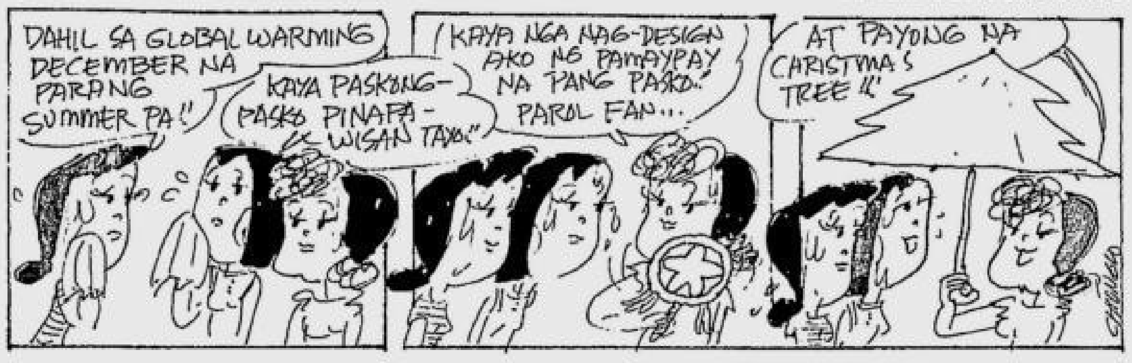
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


FATTY SNAX DELI
HE LOOKS MORE LIKE SHCROOGE TO ME.
www.kingfeatures.com
muttscomics.com
12·20

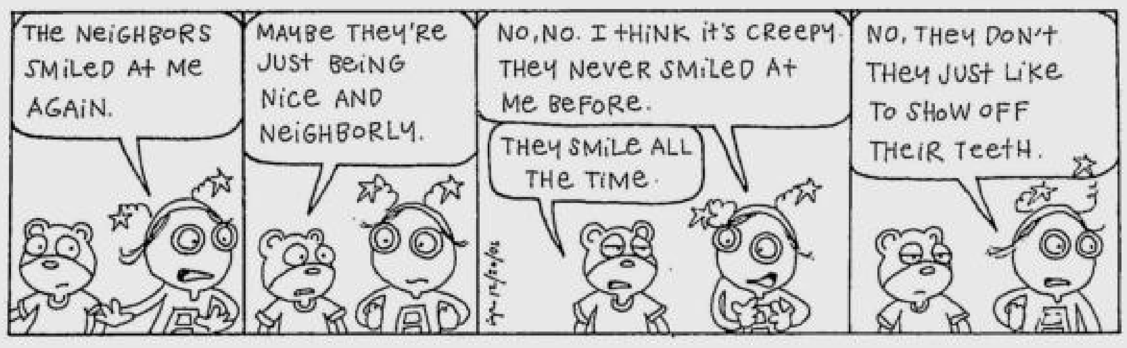
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


DAHIL SA GLOBAL WARMING DECEMBER NA PARANG SUMMER PA!"
KAYA PASKONG-PASKO PINAPAYPAYWISAN TAYO!"
KAYA NGA NAG-DESIGN AKO NG PAMAYPAY NA PANG PASKO! PAROL FAN...
AT PAYONG NA CHRISTMAS TREE!!"

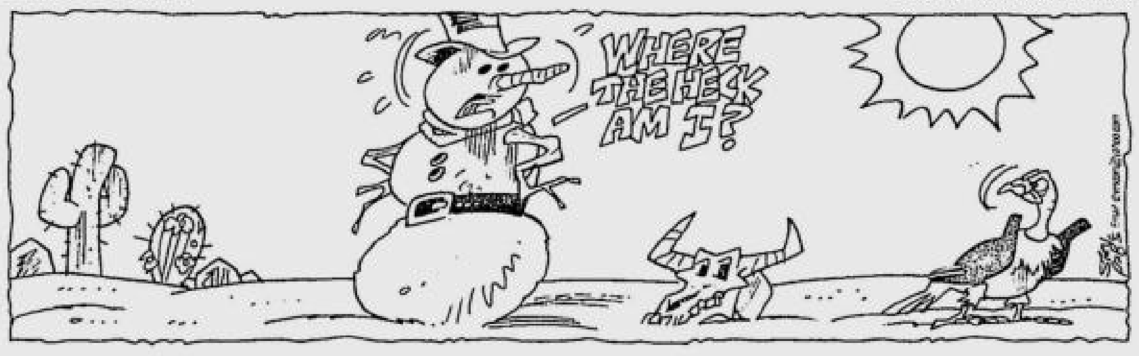
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


THE NEIGHBORS SMILED AT ME AGAIN.
MAYBE THEY'RE JUST BEING NICE AND NEIGHBORLY.
NO, NO. I THINK IT'S CREEPY. THEY NEVER SMILED AT ME BEFORE.
THEY SMILE ALL THE TIME.
NO, THEY DON'T. THEY JUST LIKE TO SHOW OFF THEIR TEETH.

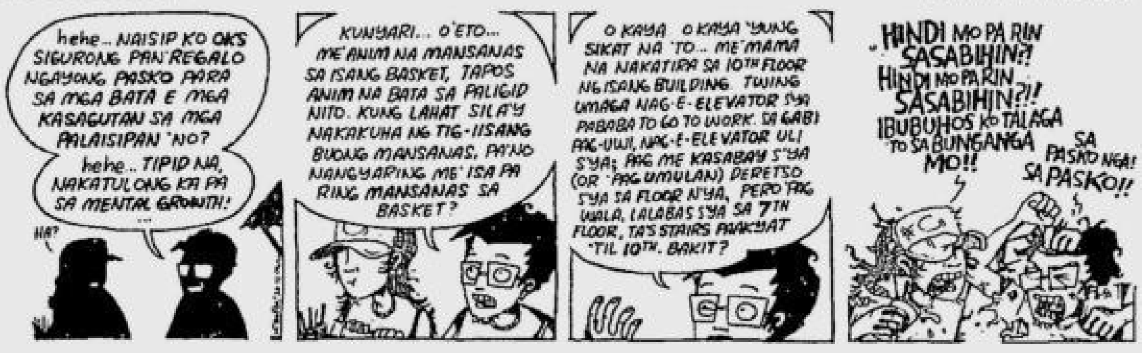
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


WHERE THE HECK AM I?

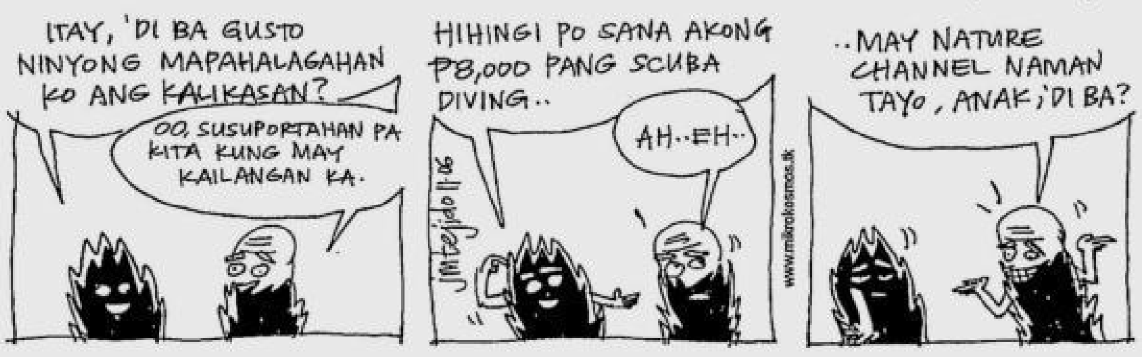
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


hehe.. NAISIP KO OKS SIGURONG PAN'REGALO NGAYONG PASKO PARA SA MGA BATA E MGA KASAGUTAN SA MGA PALAISIPAN 'NO?
hehe.. TIPID NA, NAKATULONG KA PA SA MENTAL GROWTH!
HA?
...
KUNYARI... O'ETO... ME'ANIM NA MANSANAS SA ISANG BASKET, TAPOS ANIM NA BATA SA PALIGID NITO. KUNG LAHAT SILA'Y NAKAKUHA NG TIG-IISANG BUONG MANSANAS, PA'NO NANGYARING ME' ISA PA RING MANSANAS SA BASKET?
O KAYA O KAYA 'YUNG SIKAT NA 'TO... ME'MAMA NA NAKATIRA SA 10TH FLOOR NG ISANG BUILDING. TUWING UMAGA NAG-E-ELEVATOR S'YA PABABA TO GO TO WORK. SA GABI PAG-UWI, NAG-E-ELEVATOR ULI S'YA; PAG ME KASABAY S'YA (OR 'PAG UMULAN) DERETSO S'YA SA FLOOR N'YA, PERO 'PAG WALA, LALABAS S'YA SA 7TH FLOOR, TA'S STAIRS PAAKYAT 'TIL 10TH. BAKIT?
HINDI MO PA RIN SASABIHIN?!
HINDI MO PA RIN SASABIHIN?!!
IBUBUHOS KO TALAGA 'TO SA BUNGANGA MO!!
SA PASKO NGA! SA PASKO!!

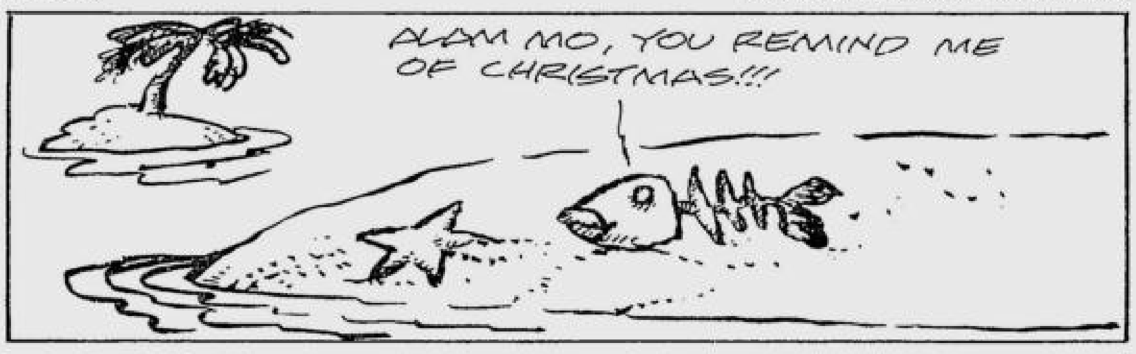
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


ITAY, 'DI BA GUSTO NINYONG MAPAHALAGAHAN KO ANG KALIKASAN?
OO, SUSUPORTAHAN PA KITA KUNG MAY KAILANGAN KA.
HIHINGI PO SANA AKONG ₱8,000 PANG SCUBA DIVING..
AH..EH..
..MAY NATURE CHANNEL NAMAN TAYO, ANAK, 'DI BA?
www.mikrokosmos.tk

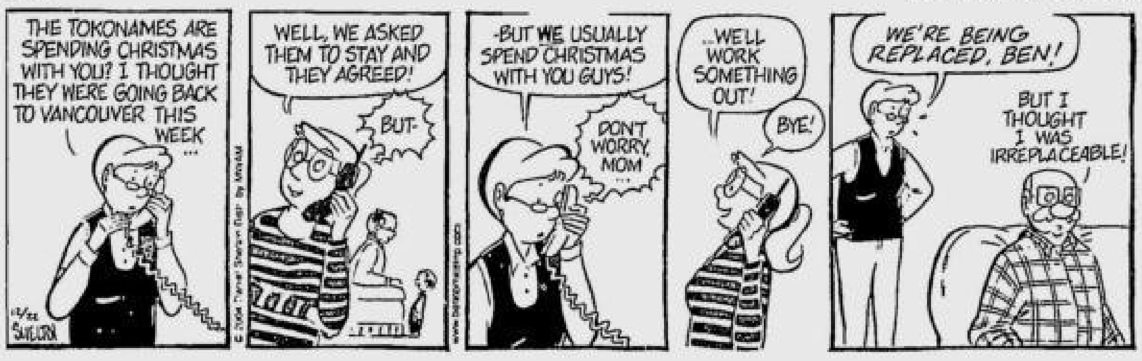
TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


ALAM MO, YOU REMIND ME OF CHRISTMAS!!!

BEN

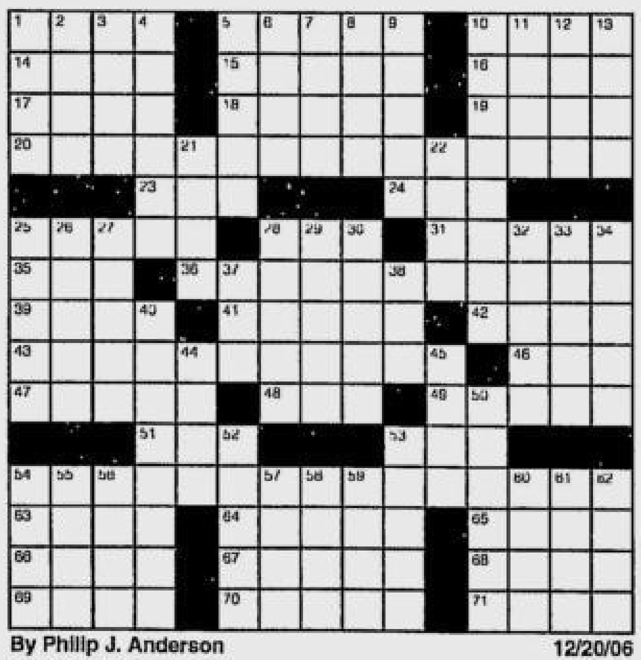
BY DANIEL SHELTON


THE TOKONAMES ARE SPENDING CHRISTMAS WITH YOU? I THOUGHT THEY WERE GOING BACK TO VANCOUVER THIS WEEK ...
WELL, WE ASKED THEM TO STAY AND THEY AGREED!
BUT-
-BUT WE USUALLY SPEND CHRISTMAS WITH YOU GUYS!
DON'T WORRY, MOM ...
..WE'LL WORK SOMETHING OUT!
BYE!
WE'RE BEING REPLACED, BEN!
BUT I THOUGHT I WAS IRREPLACEABLE!

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Hacienda room
5 Unit of capacitance
10 Fall short
14 Chi-town paper
15 "That's __"
16 Inactive
17 Matures
18 Billiards shot
19 Shuttle grp.
20 H. Greeley's misguidance?
23 "Treasure Island" auth.
24 "Norma __"
25 "Come Back, Little __"
28 Prof's aides
31 Tabriz resident
35 Old seafarer
36 James Dean's misguided movie?
39 Historic times
41 Gulf of Mex. neighbor
42 Condensations
43 Misplaced musical?
46 Spike or Pinky
47 Dirty tactic
48 Make lace
49 Dizzying pictures
51 CD-__
53 Broadcast
54 Dislocated Nick Nolte movie?
63 Singer Vince
64 Contaminate
65 Cut back
66 For two, in music
67 Kemo Sabe's pal
68 GNP subj.
69 Dweeb's pal?
70 Odorific compound
71 Camera part



By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR
12/20/06

DOWN

1 Guys only
2 Jason's vessel
3 Prevaricates
4 Soak up
5 Particulars
6 Oriental nanny
7 Actor Calhoun
8 End of a buck?
9 Show reluctance
10 Informed on
11 Eden man
12 Ingrid in "Casablanca"
13 Low in fat
21 __ Bator, Mongolia
22 Childlike one
25 Goulash and ragout
26 Muslim women's quarters
27 Wipe memory
28 Pamphlet
29 Courtyards
30 Change gears
32 Ms. Rogers St. Johns
33 Dated more recently
34 Map showing more detail
37 Andes tuber
38 Geisha's sash
40 Taken aback
44 Urge
45 Hairdo
50 Push forward
52 Photo finish
53 John Jacob __
54 Alaska's first governor
55 Adjutant
56 Utter indistinctly
57 Asian nation
58 Dryer accumulation
59 Pay to play
60 Daytona 500, e.g.
61 Disney sci-fi flick
62 Urges

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

S	A	N	T	A	■	J	A	B	B	A	■	H	A	S
A	V	E	R	S	■	A	L	O	E	S	■	O	D	E
L	O	V	E	H	A	N	D	L	E	S	■	A	L	E
S	W	E	E	T	P	E	A	■	R	U	G	R	A	T
■	■	■	■	R	E	T	■	C	B	R	A	D	I	O
P	A	S	T	A	■	S	T	R	E	E	P	■	■	■
A	L	W	A	Y	S	■	E	E	L	S	■	O	F	F
S	T	A	R	■	P	I	X	E	L	■	C	O	R	E
T	O	N	■	T	A	R	A	■	Y	I	P	P	E	E
■	■	■	S	H	R	I	N	E	■	N	O	S	E	S
G	O	A	T	E	E	S	■	R	E	D	■	■	■	■
I	N	D	E	B	T	■	R	A	D	I	A	N	C	E
S	A	D	■	L	I	P	O	S	U	C	T	I	O	N
M	I	L	■	O	R	A	T	E	■	T	O	N	I	C
O	R	E	■	B	E	N	E	S	■	S	M	E	L	L

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12/20/06

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're a philosopher at heart. You're bright, active and quick in all your actions. You act on your impulses. You're quick to see the big picture, and you're very hard-working. You are staunch about defending your opinions; you're not a fence-sitter. Expect some major changes this year, perhaps as significant as in 1998.
Birthdate of: Michael Badalucco, actor; David Wright, baseball third baseman; Billy Bragg, singer/songwriter.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): What can you do to improve your education? Is there some training you need in order to help you in your career or job? Be open to new ideas and new ways of thinking.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Today's New Moon urges you to look at how you share things with others. Are you happy with the division of shared property?

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): This is the only New Moon opposite your sign all year. Today is the perfect day to ask yourself what you can do to improve your closest one-on-one relationships.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Is there some way you can improve how you do your job? Or do you want to improve the job itself? Today's New Moon urges you to consider this.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): It's important to recognize your need to play and your need to express your creative side. All work and no play just makes Jack's widow rich.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Each New Moon offers us an opportunity to turn over a new leaf. What can you do to improve your relationships with family members or where you live?

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): This is the best day all year to think about your style of communicating with others. Are you clear about how you express yourself? Do you listen?

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Are you happy with how you're handling your finances? This is a good day to figure out what you own and what you owe. Stay on top of your money scene.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): This is the only New Moon in your sign all year. This is the best time to look in the mirror and do a reality check about the physical image you project every day.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Think about how you can clarify matters that involve the government or large institutions. You might also think about how much solitude you need to promote your own peace of mind.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Would you like to have yourself as a friend? Today's New Moon asks you to think about how you can improve your friendships and your relations with colleagues.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Today's New Moon takes place high in your chart. This is your opportunity to examine your style of relating to authority (parents, bosses and the police).

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

3			9				1	5
9				7	6			
		8				2		
	6							7
	1			3			9	
5							4	
		9				8		
			2	4				3
4	7				9			6

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/20

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

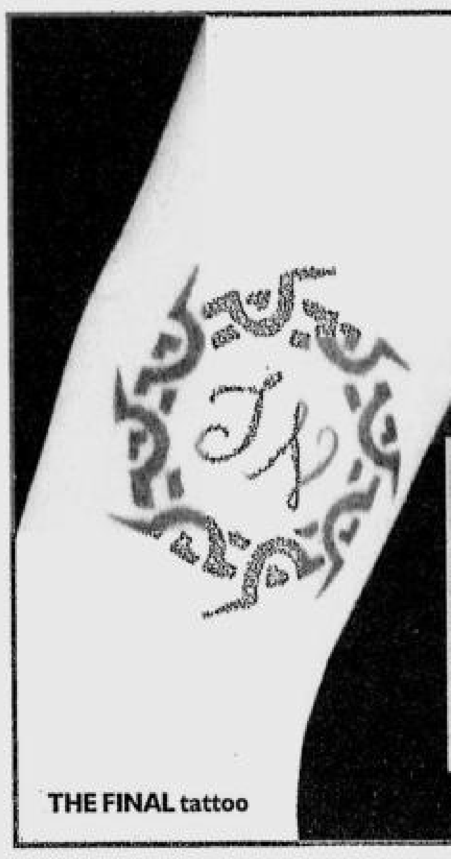
Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

8	3	9	6	5	4	1	7	2
7	1	5	9	2	3	4	6	8
6	4	2	1	8	7	5	9	3
2	6	4	5	7	1	8	3	9
1	8	3	2	6	9	7	5	4
5	9	7	4	3	8	6	2	1
9	5	1	3	4	6	2	8	7
4	7	6	8	9	2	3	1	5
3	2	8	7	1	5	9	4	6

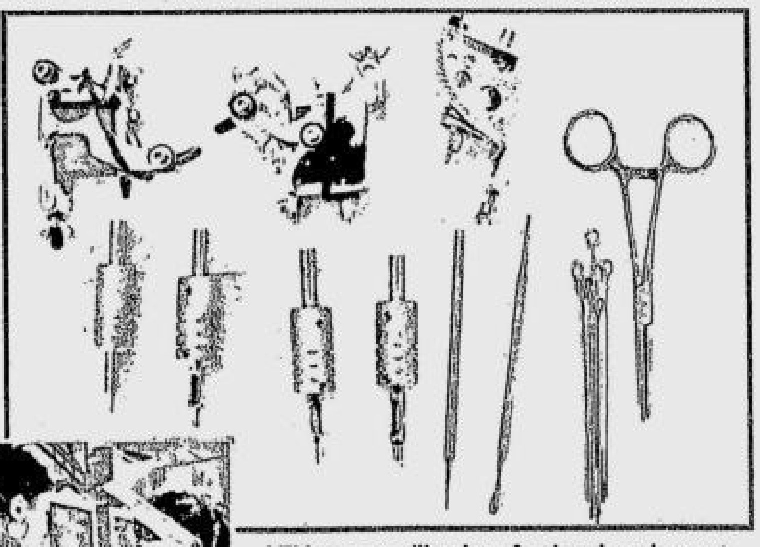
Difficulty Level ★★

RAZIELLE and her tattoo artist Lex flaunting their body art



THE FINAL tattoo

"SHE has high pain resistance," said Lex.



LEX uses sterilized professional equipment.

The love tattoo

Text and photos by Niño Mark M. Sablan
2bU! Correspondent

RAZIELLE AMBAT, 28, HAD HER FIRST tattoo 10 years ago—a tribal design that her schoolmate put on her nape. It didn't really represent anything, but she liked the design so much so she went on with it.

Just recently, 2bU! just gave her another piece of body art: a tribal ring on her inner left wrist, with the initials of husband Jay and daughter Nicole.

She had been wanting to get the tattoo for a little over a year now. But since she was still working full time and she was busy with her newborn baby, the tattoo had to wait.

Last week, Razielle finally had the tattoo—and on her birthday! Her hubby Jay, who also has a couple of tattoos on his right arm, was there to show moral support.

Thirty-four-year-old tattoo artist Lex Cabaluna performed the tattooing on Razielle. He has been doing this for 13 years, practicing on himself, his brother and friends back in his early inking days. With several images such as skulls and dragons on his own body, tattooing is Lex's main job. At his studio in España, he also offers other services like henna tattooing, body piercing, dreadlocks and tattoo removal.

The whole tattooing process took less than an hour. Because Razielle had her first tattoo years back, she had already forgotten about the pain involved. She was quickly reminded of it. The first time the needle came into contact with her skin, she wished it would end as soon as possible. Lex, on the other hand, thought Razielle handled it pretty well, making it easier for him to perfect the image.

Razielle had no regrets afterward. "I like it," she said of her free tattoo. She's not getting a new one anytime soon. "Maybe next year," she quipped.

Lex Cabaluna's studio is at 836 Vicente G. Cruz St., Trabajo Market in España. Call 7858336 or at 4937301.

E-mail the author at marksablan_2bu@yahoo.com

Raffle dazzle

RAFFLES ARE A BIG PART OF COMPANY Christmas parties. And so when Dr. Florence Villorente, resident of St. Luke's Hospital's Institute of Radiology, wrote to us about their Christmas party, we knew we wanted to help make it extra special.

A hundred and fifty people were attending their party—"from doctors and secretaries to technologists and the orderlies." Florence felt that "any kind of raffle prize will add to the fun, excitement and joy to our Christmas party."

We couldn't say no. After all, these people spend the entire year taking care of people. A raffle prize is the least they deserve.

Angie Limbaco of Samsung sent a 21-inch flat TV for the raffle.

"Thank you!" Florence said in a text message. "*May free rack pa!*"

The Institute of Radiology had its party last Thursday. Robelene Lahaylahay won the TV. We know it's going to keep her relaxed and entertained on her days off.

Pam Pastor

21" FLAT RACK

FLORENCE, Robelene (who won the raffle) and Dr. Roberto Ramos, director of the Institute of Radiology

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DEALERS ARE WELCOME

THESE CELEBS WANT A MERRY MOTO XMAS

What would make for a truly fun and funky holiday? How about bagging the latest, coolest Motorola phones? Here, celebrities tell us what they most want to see in their Christmas stocking this year:

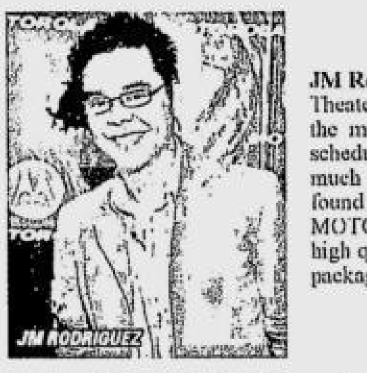
BUBBLES PARAISO
JOEY MEAD

"I love the way you simply just slide it and it flips open!"
-Bubbles Paraiso

Top model and TV personality Bubbles Paraiso is known for her individual, funky style. No wonder she'd love to have a MOTOPEBL, which makes a nice personal statement with its vivid hues and smooth oval shape.

MOTOROL
MICHELLE PAMINTUAN
CHESCA LITTON
PHOEMELA BERRANDA
CRISTINA GARCIA

Phoem Baranda and Cristina Garcia know fashion; after all, they are two of Manila's most popular supermodels. For these catwalk stars, nothing makes Christmas sparkle more than the gold MOTORAZR V3i Dolce & Gabbana. Uniting the elegance and unique design of Motorola with the individual style and attitude of D&G, this chic handset makes the perfect gift for any fashionista.



JM Rodriguez
Theater actor, TV host, commercial model the multi-faceted JM Rodriguez juggles his schedule with ease. He wants a phone that is as much a multi-tasker as he is something he found in Motorola's 3G phones. The MOTORAZR V3x, for example, can deliver high quality 3G performance in a cool, slender package just like JM.

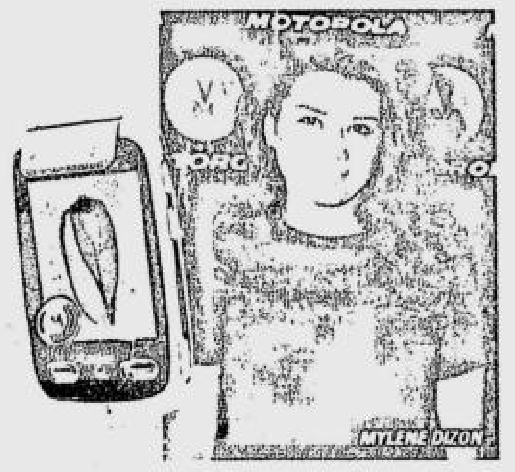
JOHN JOE JOSEPH

"I like using the V3x coz it's macho looking! With lots of memory and large screen, its perfect for showing friends funny videos. And I love the internal cam, it comes in handy when getting photos with the ladies!"
- John Joe

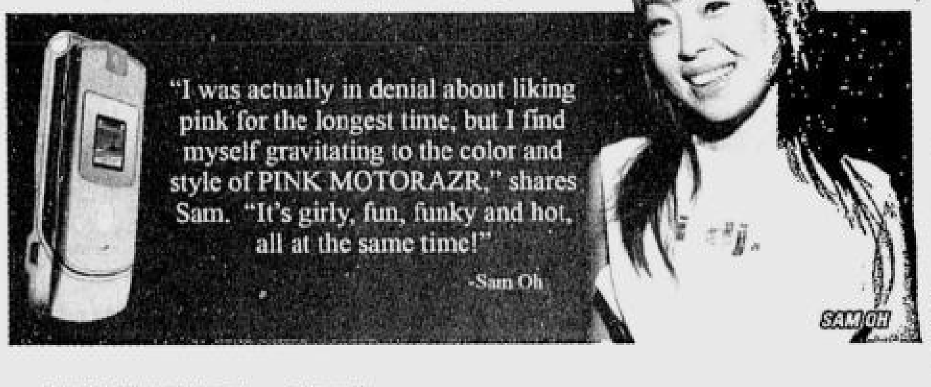
MOTOROLA
XENG ZULUETA
JACKIE CLIMACO
TINA TINIO AND TESSA DRAGON
KELLY MISA

These ladies have always been in the forefront of fashion, as the business development manager and brand manager respectively of uber-chic cosmetic brand Shu Uemura. The perpetual partnership of Shu and Motorola has redefined the meaning of synergy and the luxurious lifestyle.

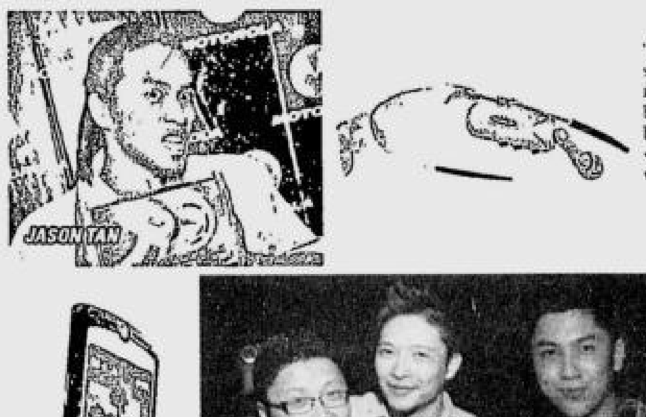
For their wish list, Tina and Tessa want the MOTOKRZR, which combines style and innovation in one elegantly sleek mobile phone to welcome the holidays in style.



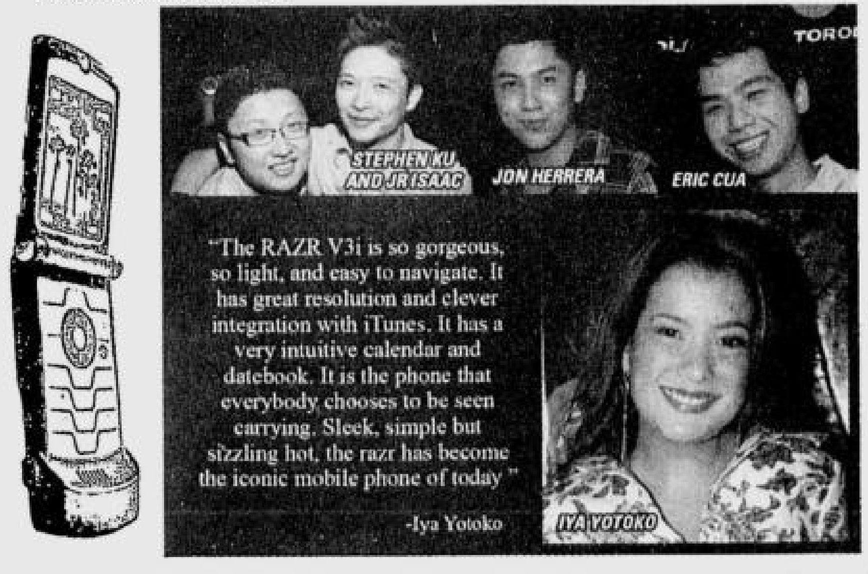
Mylene Dizon
Despite being a talented actress, Mylene Dizon remains a simple, no-frills kind of gal. For her, the MOTOMING would make the perfect holiday surprise. Supremely stylish yet amazingly compact, it provides Mylene with everything she wants and needs in a PDA phone.



"I was actually in denial about liking pink for the longest time, but I find myself gravitating to the color and style of PINK MOTORAZR," shares Sam. "It's girly, fun, funky and hot, all at the same time!"
-Sam Oh



"Besides being fashionable and sleek, what I like about Moto is the connectivity – its bluetooth headsets are no hassles in compatibilities and syncing which makes it fit well with my digital system"
-Jason Tan



"The RAZR V3i is so gorgeous, so light, and easy to navigate. It has great resolution and clever integration with iTunes. It has a very intuitive calendar and datebook. It is the phone that everybody chooses to be seen carrying. Sleek, simple but sizzling hot, the razr has become the iconic mobile phone of today"
-Iya Yotoko

DJ MARTIN PULGAR

DJ Martin Pulgar
For Embassy Superclub's DJ Martin Pulgar, music is in his blood. It's no wonder he is hankering for a Motorola's ROKR E2, the ultimate fusion of music and mobility. For club scene pioneer Martin, it's the optimized multimedia experience that puts the ROKR E2 on the top of his must-have list.

ITCHYWORMS OFFICIAL MOTOBUS BAND
CDMC
MIGGY

"It has everything I want in a phone: a really cool camera feature and most especially, a great sound quality for my MP3s."
-Miggy of Chicosci

Want to be like these celebrities and own your very own Moto phone? Join the Motorola's 12 Gifts of Christmas promo by tuning in to your favorite radio station to hear Moto's catchy Christmas tune. Wait for the DJ's cue to call and sing the Moto 12 Gifts of Christmas jingle and you might just win your dream Motorola mobile phone!

MOTOROLA
DOMINI AND JOANNE PRIMERO

Domini and Joanne Primero
There is no one in Manila's club scene who doesn't know Domini and Joanne Primero. They are the powerhouse team behind Big Fish and Driven Manila, which bring the hottest parties to the country. The stylish couple are fans of the MOTOSLVR. Slim and sleek, it revolutionized the candybar phone concept and incorporates the best features in one thin handset.

Hi-tech love

By Pam Pastor
Photos by Archie Mamawag

Kat wanted something for her two brothers, not for herself

MANY PEOPLE WROTE TO us asking for computers. Some even had specific models in mind. But we chose Katrina Sales and her brothers because their story is one of selflessness and sibling love.

Katrina is a devoted big sister.

She wrote to us about her wish for her two brothers, 21-year-old Mario Jr. and 18-year-old Jeremiah.

"I live with my two brothers, both still in college. Both of them do a lot of research and term papers for their classes, and often need to stay out late in computer shops or a relative's house to finish their work because we do not have a computer at home. I'd like to have a computer for my brothers. It doesn't have to be the spiffiest or the coolest one available. Just good enough to help them do their school work, print documents, surf the Internet, create graphics and maybe play some games on the side."

Although she wants to buy them a computer herself, she can't.

KATRINA Sales and her brothers

"I know it sounds odd, as computers nowadays can be easily acquired. I have a steady job but the money I earn often goes to the tuition of my sister and other household expenses, so setting aside money for a computer is really hard."

GENEROUS Gigi Ngui

When Gigi Ngui, VP for Sales of Goldtech, heard about Kat and her siblings, she wanted to help. She said, "You don't always get the chance to grant someone's wish."

Last Saturday, Kat and her brothers went to Goldtech to get their computer. Thanks to a thoughtful sister and Goldtech, Mario and Jeremiah no longer have to stay out late to do their school projects.

"With a computer in the house, I wouldn't have to worry about them if they're out so late, and I'll be able to help them with their work as they're nearby," said Kat.

Goldtech is located at 464 Lt. Artiaga St., San Juan

The gift of music

By Pam Pastor

He received a surprise and he paid it forward

AS THE MUSICAL DIRECTOR of the church band of the Home of the Lord Christian Assembly in Mandaluyong, Chester Pimenta devotes a lot of time to studying new songs and preparing music sheets for other members of the band.

Chester takes his music with him everywhere and studies it at home, in church and even while stuck in traffic.

His brother, EJ, one of the singers of the band, told us about the Quiapo-bought mp3 player Chester was using.

"It's old and the memory capacity isn't enough to store the songs the band is working on," he said.

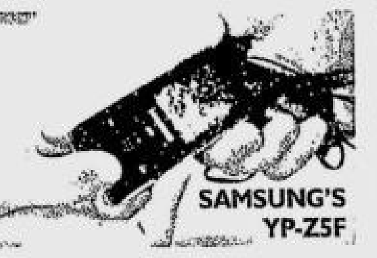
The band members take their faith and their responsibility seriously. They have been working extra hard at bringing good music to their church service.

EJ wanted a new mp3 player for Chester—and we agree. Anyone who uses music for such a good purpose deserves the best technology.

MUSIC master Chester Pimenta

Because our friends at Samsung have been telling us about their newest music players, we knew whom to approach.

"Go!" Angie Limbaco said after hearing about EJ's wish for his brother.


SAMSUNG'S YP-Z5F

When EJ surprised Chester with Samsung's YP-Z5F, a 2-GB music player loaded with features, his eyes widened. He appreciated the player's sleek design and 2-gig capacity. "I love it!" he said.

The gift of Samsung is not just a gift for one person—it's a gift for a band and a church that has a strong passion for offering praise to the Lord.

It is 2bU!'s hope that after coming to the rescue of our readers, they would pay it forward. This is our own dream and one that we have not verbalized.

In Chester's case, we didn't have to. He passed on his old mp3 player to his mom, who is now discovering the joys of having her music on the go.

Samsung YP-Z5F is available in your favorite gadget stores.

GOING around in the car sponsored by Volvo

Day of wishes

From page F1

good opportunities. I've got more than enough of those."

"I'd like to pitch to you someone else's need. My boyfriend Akelle Sumaculub, a great guy who I've been close to for roughly four years, is *kuya* to his six siblings. He is their family's main breadwinner, and because of this he doesn't have the luxury of spending for some of his needs. Most of his money goes to bills already."

"His simplest need is a new pair of eyeglasses. He makes do with a pair that doesn't suit his needs, even if he ends up having giant headaches at night. One time, he admitted to me that he has trouble going home at nighttime because he could barely see anything in the dark. He also needs a new pair of office shoes, but because his money usually goes to his siblings, he doesn't want to spend on new ones. It also wouldn't hurt if you could get him a nice haircut."

Patricia continued, "When you ask him, though, what he really needs, he'd say he needs a new guitar. Akelle plays for a death metal band, but because of his family's needs, he only managed to buy a cheap guitar, which is now falling apart."

With the help of RJ Jacinto, Vivian Sarabia, Jasper Lee of The Leather Gallery, Azta Urban Salon and Volvo cars, we were able to make Patricia's wishes for Akelle come true.

Our first stop was at RJ Jacinto's office in Makati, where he was waiting with Akelle's new acoustic guitar, which he had also signed. After giving him the guitar, RJ and Akelle talked about their music and jammed for a few minutes.

Wishes granted

RJ, who was expecting a novice, was surprised to find out that Akelle had been playing the guitar for 12 years, and had played for a fairly famous death metal band. "This guy's pretty good!" he exclaimed. He also taught Akelle a few guitar tricks, including using his cell phone to play some chords. "I'm the first person to use a cell phone for playing the guitar," he said.

Next stop was The Leather Gallery in Eastwood, where Akelle chose a pair of shoes for work. Akelle spent a few minutes looking at some styles, and settled for a sturdy pair of black leather shoes from Everbest. After that, we climbed into the Volvo S80 (which sponsored our transportation for the day), and went to SM Megamall for his new glasses.

SOLE-SEARCHING at The Leather Gallery

GOOFING around during the eye test

The Luxury of Simplicity
EASTWOOD'S shoe haunt

GETTING a haircut at Azta Urban Salon

In between stops, Patricia talked about her relationship with Akelle.

"We met in a Political Science class at UP," she said. "Akelle's intelligent and outspoken, but when he saw that I beat him in class recitations, he got interested and somehow found a way to get my number and text me."

Vivian Sarabia, who owns Sarabia World of Optics, was a warm and pleasant woman. "Your glasses are too small for your face," she told Akelle. "And we'll have to upgrade your prescription; it's probably why you're getting headaches."

She bustled around the shop, asking Akelle questions about his lifestyle and picking out frames. When she went back to her work area, she had over a dozen frames for Akelle to try on. Akelle, who worked long hours on the computer writing English textbooks for Koreans, needed glasses that would make people take him seriously and at the same time be able to wear them to his gigs. "Your glasses have to reflect your personality," she said. "Any old frame just won't do."

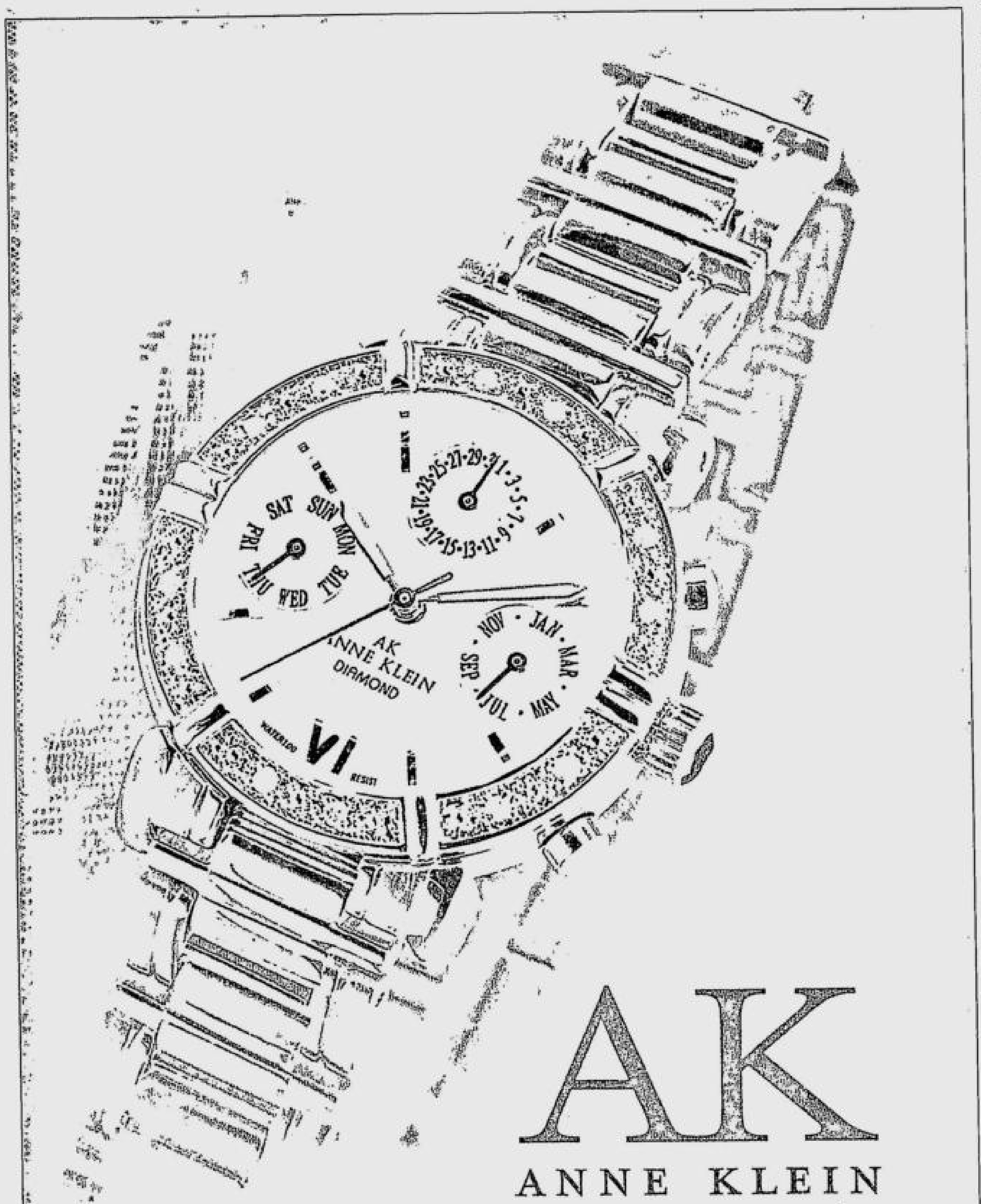
After trying on a number of frames, Akelle and Patricia settled on a matte copper pair. "When he tried on that pair, I knew we found the perfect glasses for him," Patricia said after. "The highlight of his day was the trip to Vivian Sarabia's store. He was just blown away by how kind she was and how she didn't mind the price of the frames she was picking out. He even told me he wanted her to be '*ninang* at our wedding.'"

For the last stop, we went to Azta Urban Salon in Metrowalk for Akelle's haircut. Since he wanted to maintain the length of his hair, senior stylist Rose Tabo layered Akelle's wavy hair to clean up his look and make it easier to fix. "My hair looks basically the same, but it feels lighter now," Akelle said.

Payback time

"On the way to the mall, Akelle whispered to me, '*Maghanda ka mamaya.*' I was worried that he didn't like it and we'd fight over the whole thing, but we didn't. He took me around and kept asking what he could buy for me; *gusto daw niya bumawi*," Patricia said.

"He told me that it was one of the most memorable times together, and asked if we could have a copy of all the pictures the photographers took of us. He'll have them framed to show our kids and grandkids. He really deserved all he got and much more; he's been under so much pressure for the past months," she added. "It was a great day for both of us. I get kind of teary-eyed just thinking about it."



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METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL

(INQUIRER Entertainment is running this MMFF guide to help moviegoers plan their holiday cinema tour. The festival starts Dec. 25.)

Ligalig

Stars Cesar Montano, Sunshine Cruz, Johnny Delgado, Celia Rodriguez, Rebecca Lusterio, John Regala, Katya Santos

Directed by Cesar Montano

A serial killer (Delgado) is on the loose in the city—confounding the cops with his daring and ruthlessness. The murderer crosses paths with a taxi driver (Montano) and his girlfriend (Cruz) and, owing to a mysterious connection in the past, the madman stalks them. They finally meet in the fiancée's ancestral home, where a bloody killing spree erupts. Actor-director-producer Montano's follow-up to his previous filmfest winner (the World War II drama "Panaghoy sa Suba" in 2004) is billed as a "suspense" flick. "We put in a surprising twist at the end," Montano says.

Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo

Stars Judy Ann Santos, Ryan Agoncillo, Gina Pareño, Gloria Diaz, Ariel Ureta, Soliman Cruz, Juliana Palermo

Directed by Jose Javier Reyes

Polar opposites, a brusque gal (Santos) falls for a softie guy (Agoncillo). When the unlikely pair decides to tie the knot, meddling in-laws jump into the act. The pressure pushes the couple to elope. Will their love survive the challenges of married life? Director Reyes describes this Star Cinema project as a "cute romantic-comedy." "Juday gave her all," he points out.

If Santos' scenes with Pareño seem all too real, it's because they regard each other like a true-life mom-and-daughter. After shooting a pivotal scene with the ensemble cast, Reyes reportedly exclaimed: "You're infuriating! You're all so good!" According to Agoncillo's manager Noel Ferrer, a large part of the film's fun factor was the fruit of the lead stars' friendship with and fondness for the director.

CARLENE Aguilar says she has been going out with Dennis (inset) for over four years.

Dating Dennis

By Nini Valera

IT'S NOT EASY TO BE DATING A CELEBRITY, especially if it's a hot actor like Dennis Trillo.

This, beauty queen Carlene Aguilar found out after she became tabloid fodder and entertainment news headliner recently.

Talking to INQUIRER Entertainment on Saturday, Carlene, 24, admitted that she and Dennis had been seeing each other for more than four years now.

"It doesn't mean we're committed," she stressed. "We're committed only to our careers."

Her predicament with the press she described as "*magulo* (messy)." She explained, "I'm not really show biz, and I'm not used to this."

Carlene pointed out that she had been mis-

DATING/ G2

PRINCESS Canlas from Butuan

BOJO de Dios of Olongapo

VETERAN Jun Lopito, second from left, plays with younger rockers.

Over the top with Rockista '06

By Pocholo Concepcion
Contributor

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP is doing a good job helping not only rock star wannabes, but veteran musicians as well.

The "Colt 45 Rockista 2006" singing talent search finals held recently at the Music Museum featured ace guitarist Jun Lopito as musical director.

A prominent figure of the 1970s Pinoy rock scene as former guitarist of Sampaguita, original member of the Jerks and long-time playing partner of Pepe Smith, Lopito was said to have been struck by an eye ailment that caused him to lose interest in music. There was wild talk among Internet discussion groups that Lopito had bequeathed his trusty old Fender Stratocaster to his daughter.

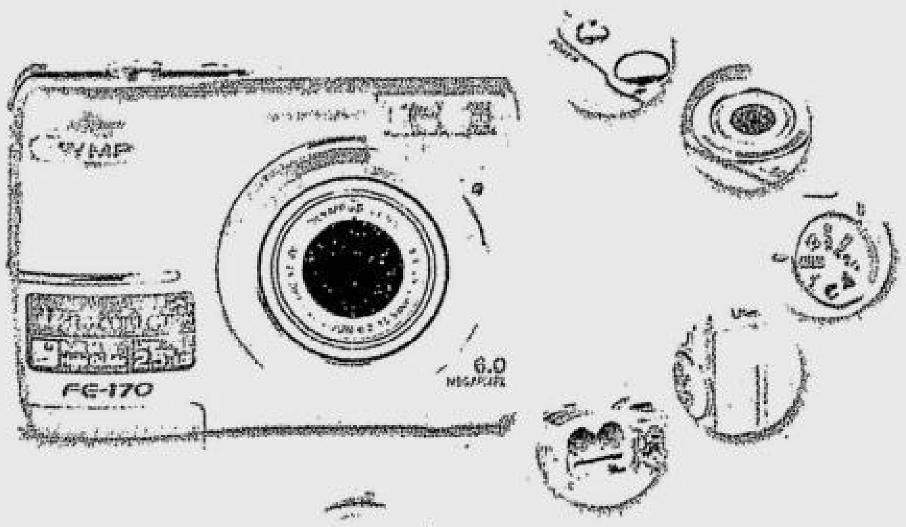
Relaxed jurors

But there he was on stage at the "Rockista" event, looking fully recovered, playing lead guitar and leading the house band, Sandwich, in accompanying the top two contenders for the grand prize.

The board of judges—composed of Jerks front man Chickoy Pura, former Put3Ska/Brownbeat All Stars vocalist Myra Ruaro (known these days as jazz solo singer Skarlet), Imago drummer Zach Lucero and Radioactive Sago Project leader Lourd De Veyra, appeared very relaxed—possibly on account of Lopito's excellent handling of the music which, in turn, pushed the contenders to give their best performance.

Adopting a setup similar to "American Idol" and "Rockstar INXS," event host

OVER/ G2



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DAMI SMART TAYO

Dating Dennis

From page G1

quoted in TV reports and tabloid stories every time she talked about Dennis.

"So I won't say anything *na lang*," she said. "Dennis and I have talked about it and we both agreed to just keep quiet."

The beauty queen, who was recently named Miss Internet 2006 and will be crowned in Taiwan tomorrow, said she and Dennis had met when they both trained as part of ABS-CBN's "Star Circle" in 2001.

"I was being trained for news; Dennis, for acting," Carlene recalled. "But Mr. M (Johnny Manahan, Star Studio manager) asked me to train for acting. That's how Dennis and I got together."

While her show biz career did not pan out, Dennis became a major star.

But Carlene is pretty much in the limelight as a beauty titlist—Miss Philippines Earth 2001; Miss Chinatown 2004; and Bb. Pilipinas World 2005 (she got the highest number of text votes from global viewers).

She also appears in TV commercials, like the recent San Miguel Beer ad.

She never planned on being a beauty queen, according to Carlene.

"It was my Mom's dream [for herself]," she said. "That's why she entered my name for Miss Philippines Earth. I was boyish at the time, and was not fond of dressing up."

As second runner up to the Miss Chinese International pageant, Carlene got to work in Hong Kong as an actress and commercial model for seven months.

"But I got homesick," she said, "and I wanted to finish my studies."

She returned to the Philippines in early 2005, only to find out that she would have to wait a few months to enroll again at the University of the Philippines, where she was taking up Art Studies. While waiting, she joined the Bb. Pilipinas contest and was picked to represent the country in the Miss World pageant.

"That's how it happened," she said. "I felt weird joining another contest after I had won the Miss Earth. But somehow, I was convinced to do it and I'm happy for the experience."

She also welcomes the trips that come as part of her reign.

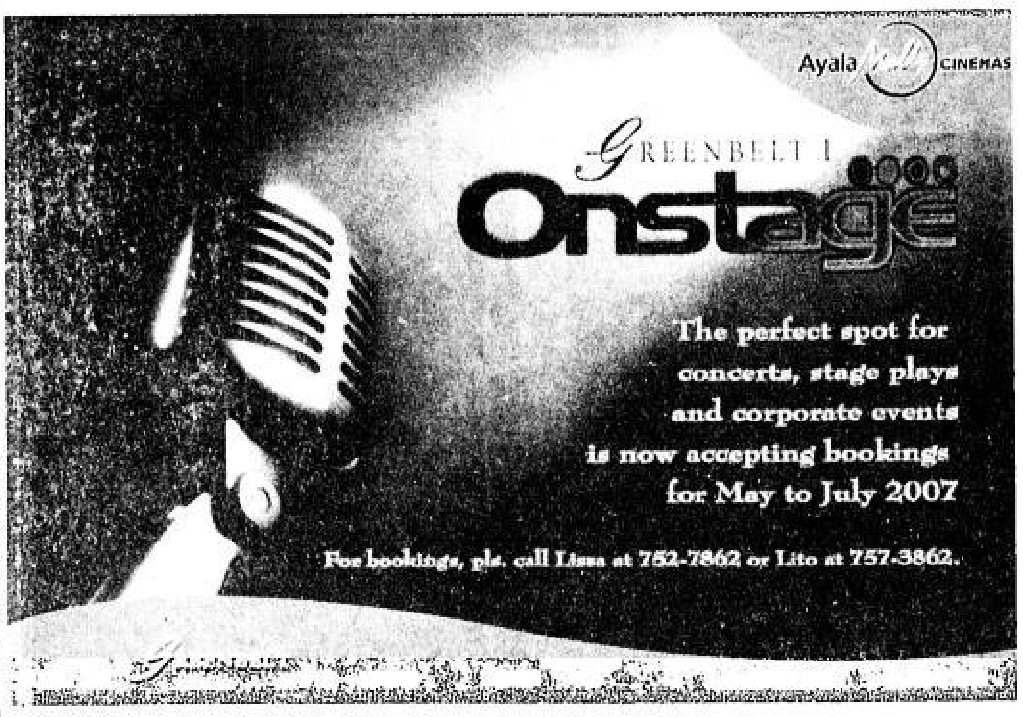
"Imagine, I only had to pay twice for airfare for all my travels," she said. "The rest came as part of the package."

Beyond the glamour

Life as a beauty queen won't end after the year's reign, according to Carlene. She has joined the Beauty Ambassadors of the Philippines Foundation, which seeks to gather beauty queens to help future contestants train for international pageants.

But more important than that task is the foundation's goal to help less fortunate Filipinos.

"Our priority is really charity," Carlene said of the organization, headed by reigning Miss International Precious Lara Quigaman. "As beauty queens, we are looked up to as role models. As such, we can focus on charity work and help other people, like the victims of Typhoon "Reming" in Bicol."



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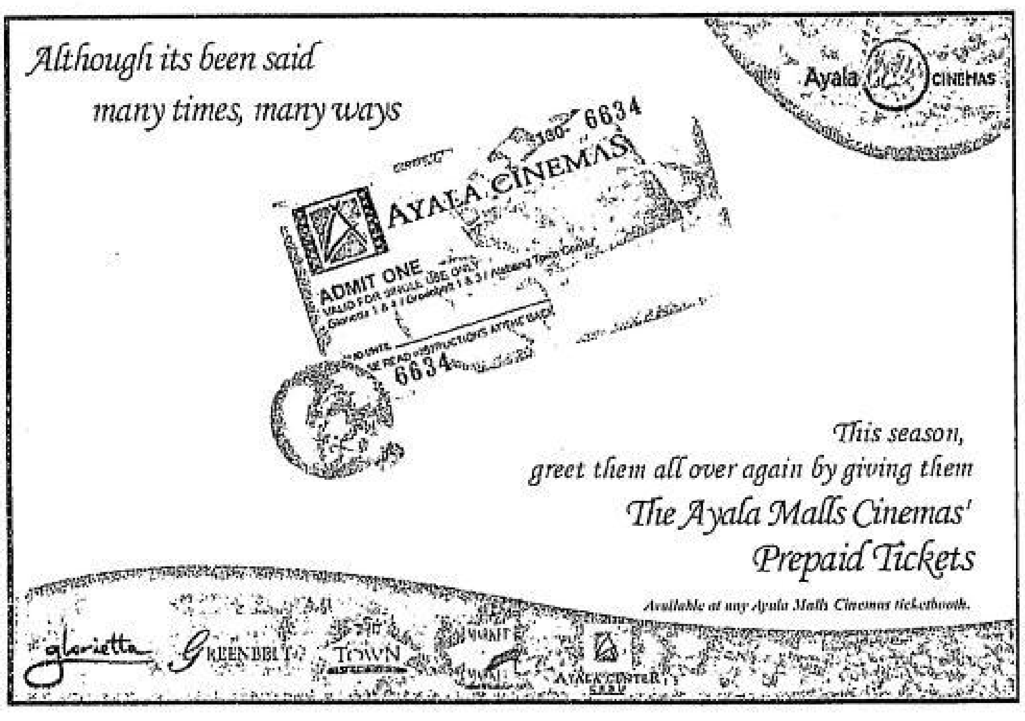

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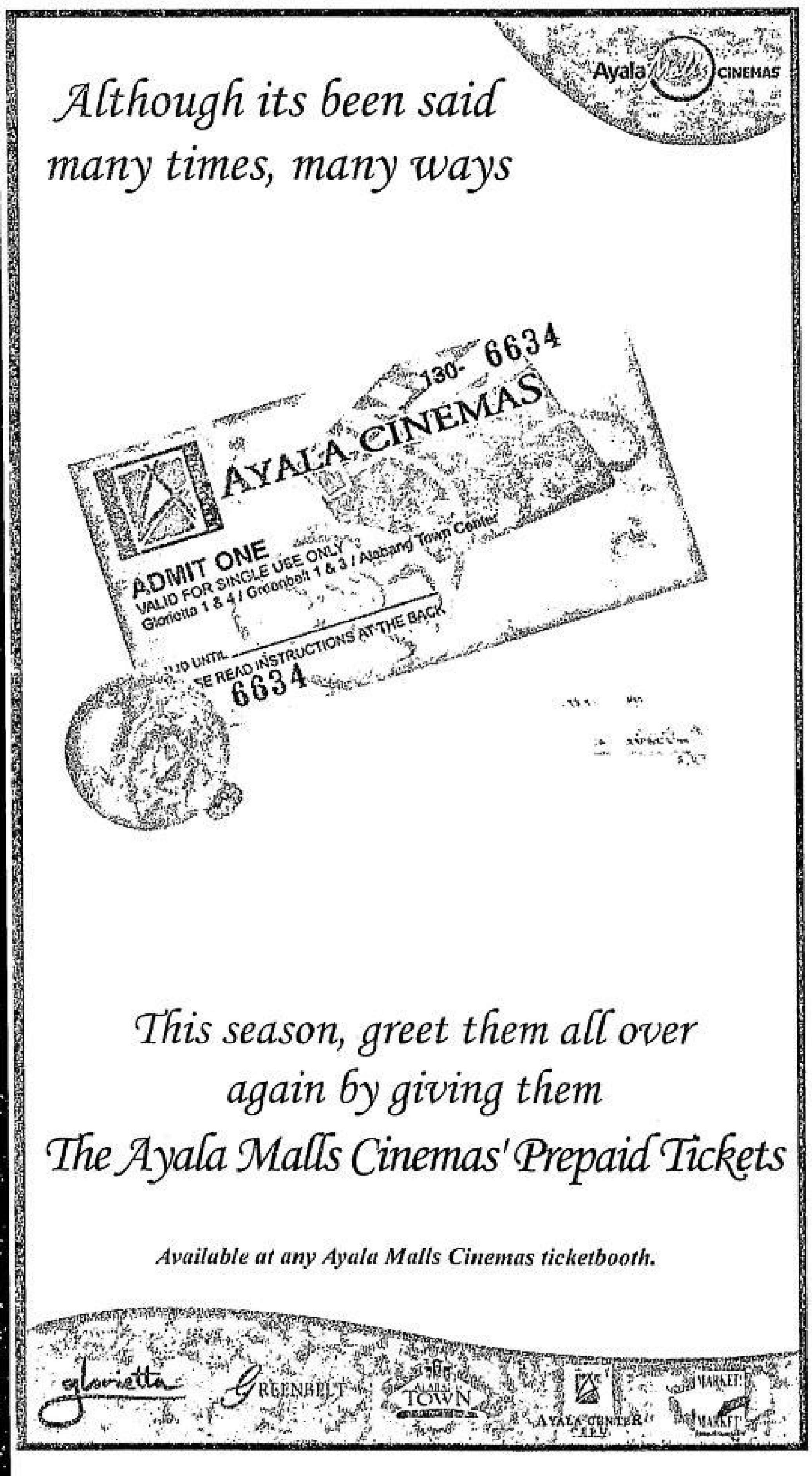

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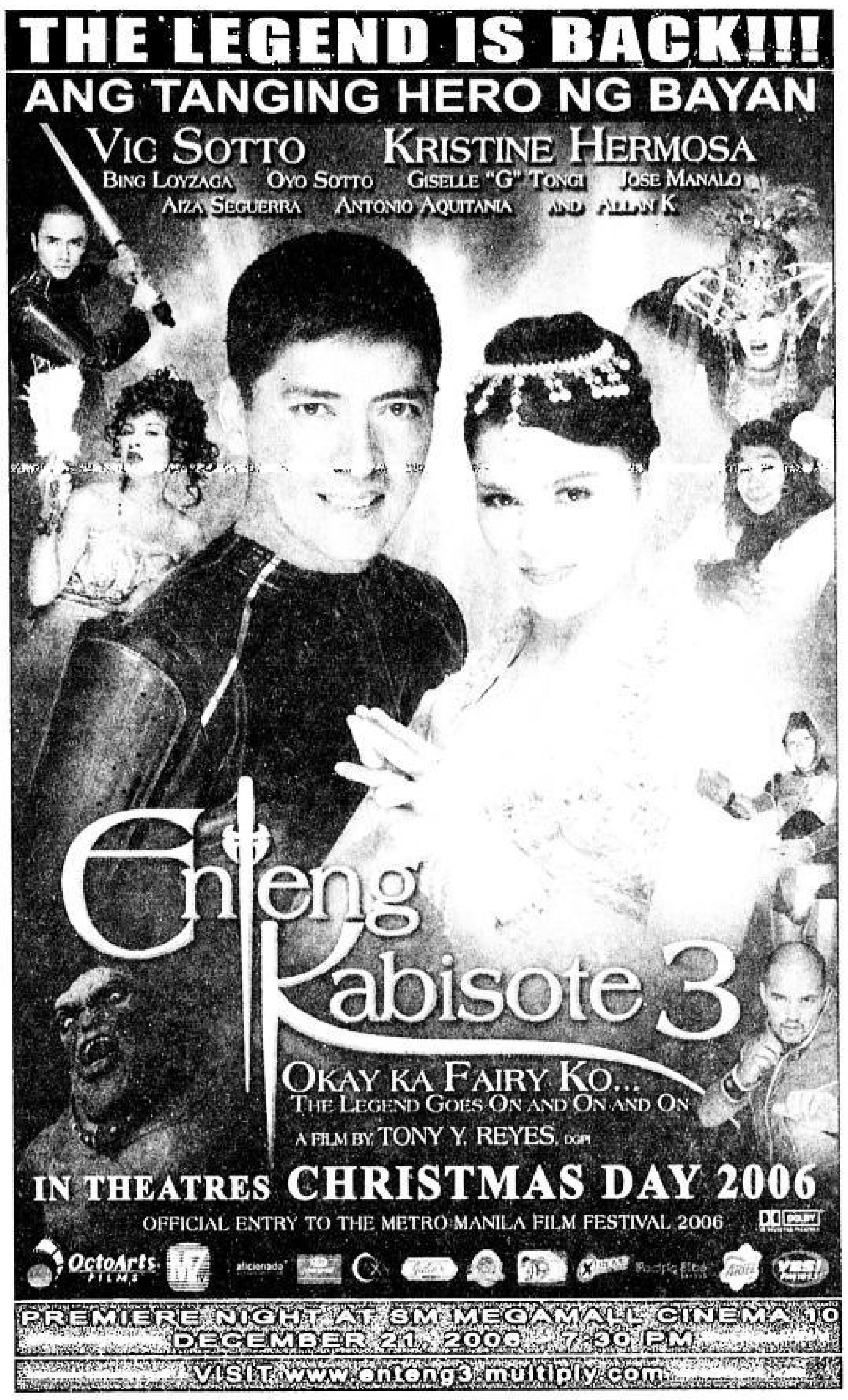

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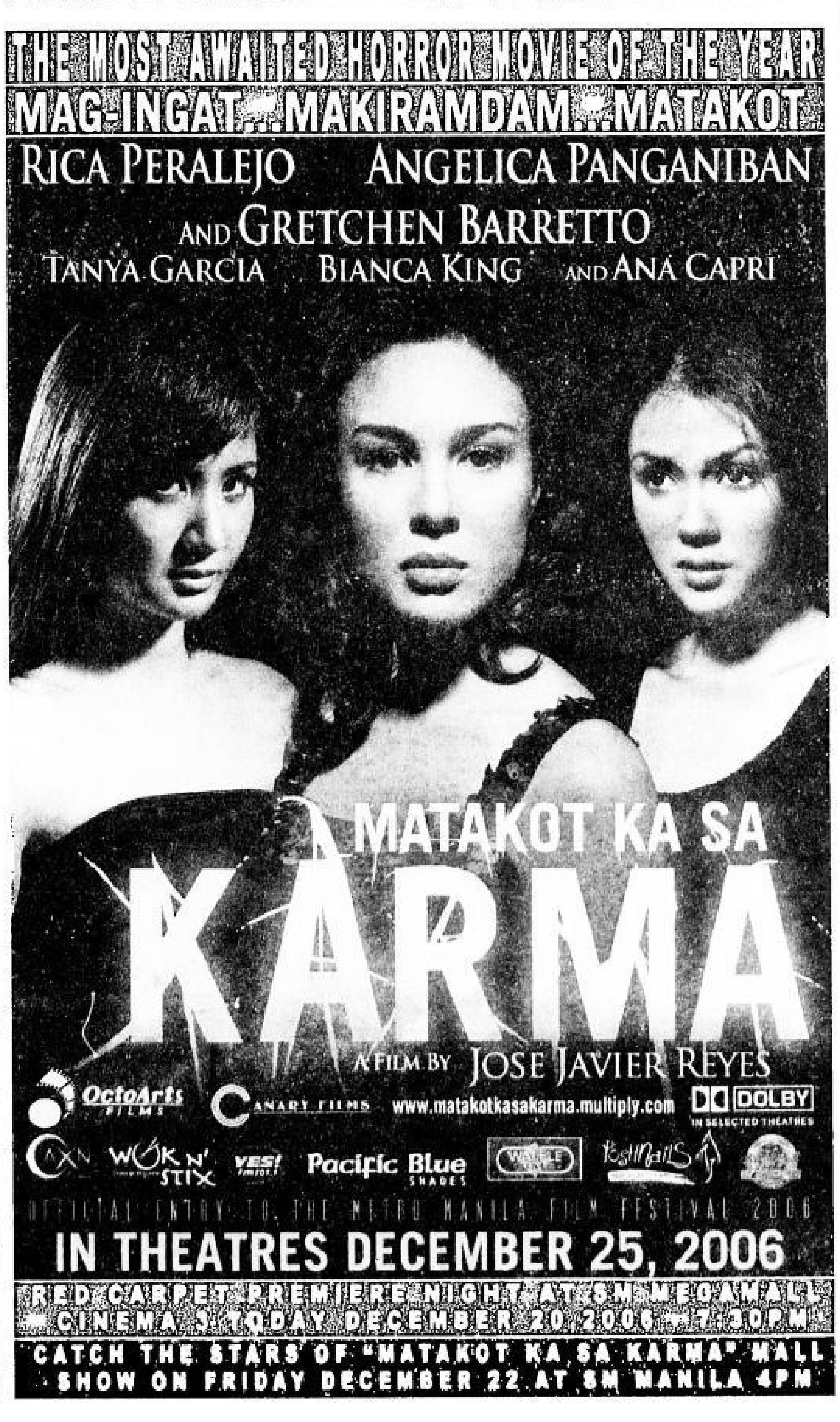

THE MOST AWAITED HORROR MOVIE OF THE YEAR
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AND GRETCHEN BARRETTO
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AFTER KEANNA REEVES TOPP "Pinoy Big Brother" popularity sour image sweetened up in a big producers lined up to offer her m lore.

Alas, it turned out to be a cas much, too soon, and her first performed phlegmatically at office.

Now comes her second film, " and it's instructive to note th time around, the movie is pushed, not really as a Keanna but as a comedy about female sonators.

Once bitten, twice shy? An goes ...

Regal fields four entries:

At the year-end Metro film it's interesting to see that Reg own promotional thrust pus moviemaking conglomerate's tival entries.

In past editions of the festiva used to hem and haw about it entry financing and participati now that the film fest's rules ha adjusted, Regal's current "ant plug on TV boosts all of the fou it's helped finance—"Gua "Shake, Rattle and Roll," " Zaturnah" and "Super Noypi" (

This is a more forthright sta fairs. But industry observers a the fact that mainstream pr strong hold on the festival me smaller and more alternative ers have a hard time getting in ficial competition, and thus be from all of the perks attendant

This is ironic and not a lit diluvian because the big new days is how the Filipino film has been given a strong shot in by digital and alternative film For them to be poorly repres the Metro film festival is a shame.

'Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo'

Another festival entry, "Kasal Kasalo," has its own unique tal Its screenplay, written by M Bautista, won second prize in Development Foundation of th pines' national scriptwriting c tion and was bought for filmin Cinema some 10 long years ago

The fact that it's taken prac

Over the top with Rockista

From page G1

Raimund Marasigan of Sandwich asked each member of the panel of judges for comments and suggestions based on the performances.

The contenders, Princess Canlas from Butuan and Bojo de Dios of Olongapo, sang two songs each. Canlas interpreted Urbandub's "Endless Silent Whisper" and Bamboo's "Noypi." De Dios rendered versions of Sandwich's "Butterfly Carnival" and Rivermaya's "Awit ng Kabataan."

All the judges had glowing comments for De Dios, whose Bono-like stance and confidence seemed to have given him an edge. But Pura's raves were followed by some criticism: "Confidence is everything, but there's got to be method to the madness."

Don't push unless...

Pura was referring to De Dios' tendency to go over the top with his energy. Although he might have had the "Rockista" x-factor consisting of a throaty yet captivating voice, combined with the right moves, De Dios must work hard on acquiring a sense of control, or knowing when his level of excitement has hit the max.

When he was proclaimed winner, De Dios got to jam with Lopito, who had Smith by his side to sing "Himig Natin." Horror of horrors, De Dios didn't know the lyrics to the song, which happens to be Pinoy rock's rallying anthem. Either he was too young, or too flushed with just having won P400,000 plus a recording contract and, presumably, all the beer he could drink.

In any case, the idea of Colt 45 promoting Bojo de Dios as its latest endorser and symbol of the new blood of "rock icons" must not be pushed without the able guiding hands of professionals who have invested their lives playing and breathing the music.

Somebody really good must always be by De Dios' side when he goes onstage. Somebody like Jun Lopito should take care of that.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Therein lies a show biz tale

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decade for the outstanding screenplay to see the light of film should cause other movie scriptwriters to be patient and not lose heart. Good projects finally will out, so hang in there!

Of course, we don't know at this stage how much of Bautista's work has "survived" the onus of time and revisions. We'll have to wait for the Metro film fest to open later this month to find out. "Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo" stars Judy Ann Santos and Ryan Agoncillo.

Princess Diana remembered

Princess Diana is in the news again, after recent revelations about her most tragic and intensely lamented death some 10 years ago.

Newly discovered or confirmed details about her fatal car accident have served to once more focus the public's attention on her glamorous but troubled life, and her charismatic persona.

There's talk about a new Diana film bio, and producers are looking around for a look-alike actress to play the late, lamented "Princess of the People." Any suggestions?

Our bet is Paris Hilton, who looks like a young Diana. Now, if only she can be taught to speak the Queen's English—and how to act!

Mel Gibson 'forgiven'

After Mel Gibson was arrested for driving under the influence and letting loose with some smarmy anti-Semitic slurs, some Hollywood observers coldly advised him to kiss his entertainment career goodbye.

Not so fast. Others opined that the big test indicating the viewing public's permanent scorn or eventual forgiveness would be the box-office showing of Gibson's latest film, "Apocalypto."

Well, the film has finally opened in the States, and it looks like the public has indeed decided to forgive Gibson for his monumental gaffe.

Proof positive? "Apocalypto" has topped the weekend box office, beating rivals like "The Holiday" and "Happy Feet."

The sobering news is that "Apocalypto" grossed only $14 million, low by US show biz standards. But, first place is first place, so Gibson's movie's successful outcome still cannot be gainsaid.

Its good showing was particularly remarkable because it has no star value, is set in the distant past, and its characters speak in a "dead" Mayan language.

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

This Keanna Reeves starrer is now billed as a comedy about female impersonators

KEANNA REEVES: Too much too soon?

ROMY HOMILLADA

SHANG CINEPLEX

① TENACIOUS D
MTRCB R-13
12:40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00

② THE NATIVITY
MTRCB. GP
1:20, 3:30, 5:40, 7:50, 10:00

③ HAPPY FEET
MTRCB GP
2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00

④ CASINO ROYALE
MTRCB PG-13 1:25, 7:00
A GOOD YEAR
MTRCB PG-13 4:30, 10:00

PREMIERE THEATRE
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PG-13

CINEMA 2 A GOOD YEAR
12:00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00
PG-13

DOLBY DIGITAL

PROMENADE
GREENHILLS

CINEMA 3 DECK THE HALLS //THE NATIVITY
11:40, 1:50, 4:00, //6:00, 8:20, 10:35
GP

CINEMA 4 TENACIOUS D
11:20, 1:35, 3:50, 6:05, 8:20, 10:35
R-13

CINEMA 5 HAPPY FEET
11:00, 1:15, 3:35, 5:55, 8:15, 10:35
GP

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MUSIC MUSEUM

DEC 27, 2006	"Kyla" Give Love On Christmas Day	8:00 PM
DEC 28, 2006	Truefaith, Mojofly, Gup Firenze	8:30 PM

TEATRINO

EVERY MONDAY	DANCE NIGHT	7:00PM
DEC. 23, 2006	Mishka Adams	9:00 PM
Jan. 16, 23, 30, 2007	Dyords Ko Po	8:30 PM
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ALL THE KING'S MEN 1:40 / 4:20 / 7:00 / 9:40	BORAT 1:00 / 3:10 / 5:20 / 7:30 / 9:40	HAPPY FEET 12:10 / 2:30 / 4:50 / 7:10 / 9:30	
DOLBY DIGITAL-EX	CASINO ROYALE 1:20 / 4:10 / 7:00 / 9:50	INANG YAYA 12:30 / 2:40 / 7:10	ALL THE KING'S MEN 1:00 / 3:40 / 6:20 / 9:00

Ali MALL 5

SPIRIT TRAP 12:40 / 2:40 / 4:40 / 6:40 / 8:40	CASINO ROYALE 12:00 / 2:50 / 5:40 / 8:30	TENACIOUS 'D' 1:20 / 3:40 / 6:00 / 8:20
SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD 12:05 03 / 1:35 / 3:45 / 5:55 / 8:05	KAMASUTRA 3 12:10 / 2:10 / 4:10 / 5:10 / 8:10	DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

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G4	1 LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE	2 TENACIOUS D	3 THX CASINO ROYALE GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 ALL THE KING'S MEN	5 A GOOD YEAR	6 HAPPY FEET	7 THE NATIVITY
GB1	1 TENACIOUS D	2 HAPPY FEET		
GB3	1 THX A GOOD YEAR GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX HAPPY FEET GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 THE NATIVITY GUARANTEED SEATS	4 TENACIOUS D GUARANTEED SEATS	5 LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX HAPPY FEET GUARANTEED SEATS	2 A GOOD YEAR		
	3 THE NATIVITY	4 SPIRIT TRAP	5 TENACIOUS D	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 DECK THE HALLS	2 MEE-SHEE	3 FRAGILE	4 HAPPY FEET
M2 MARKET! MARKET!	1 HAPPY FEET	2 A GOOD YEAR		
	3 THE NATIVITY	4 SPIRIT TRAP	5 TENACIOUS D	

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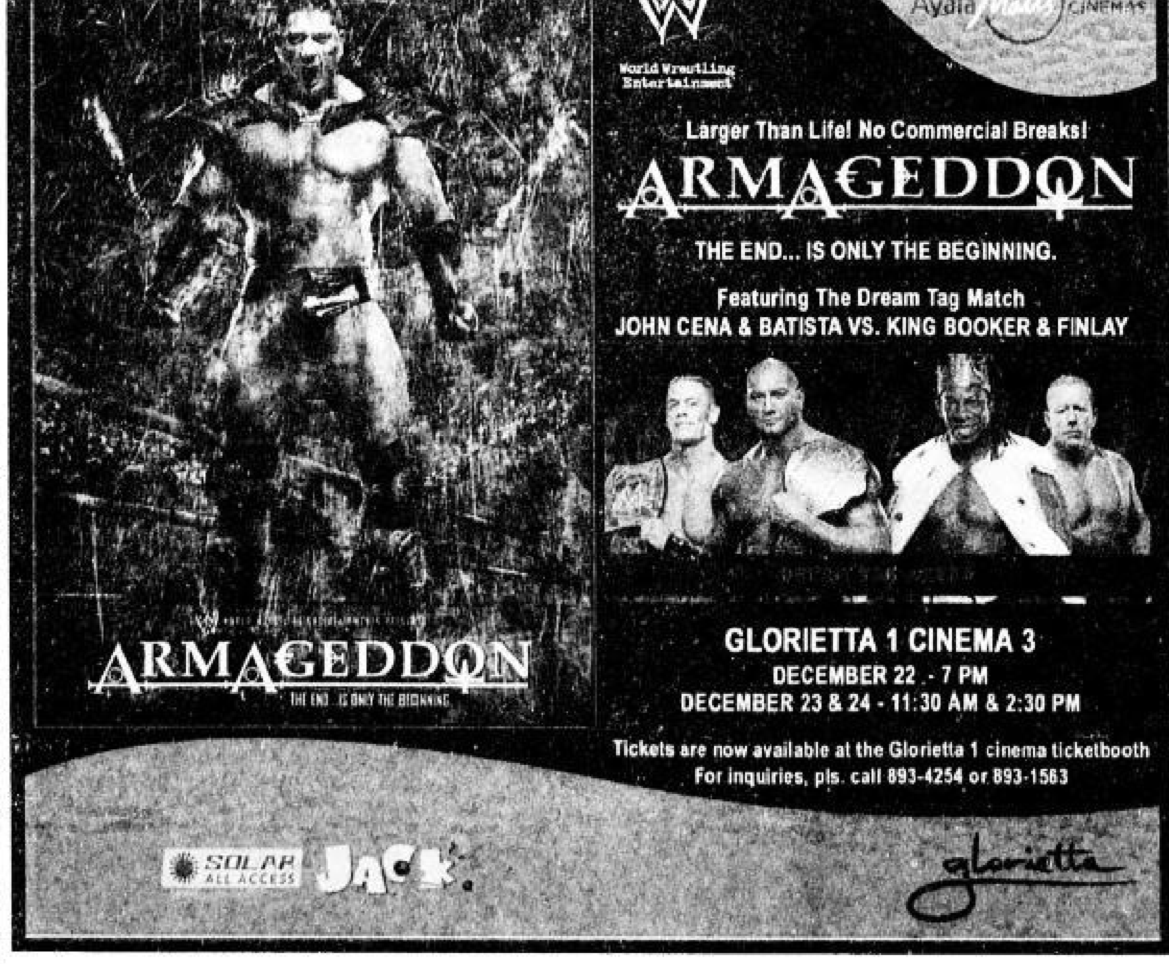

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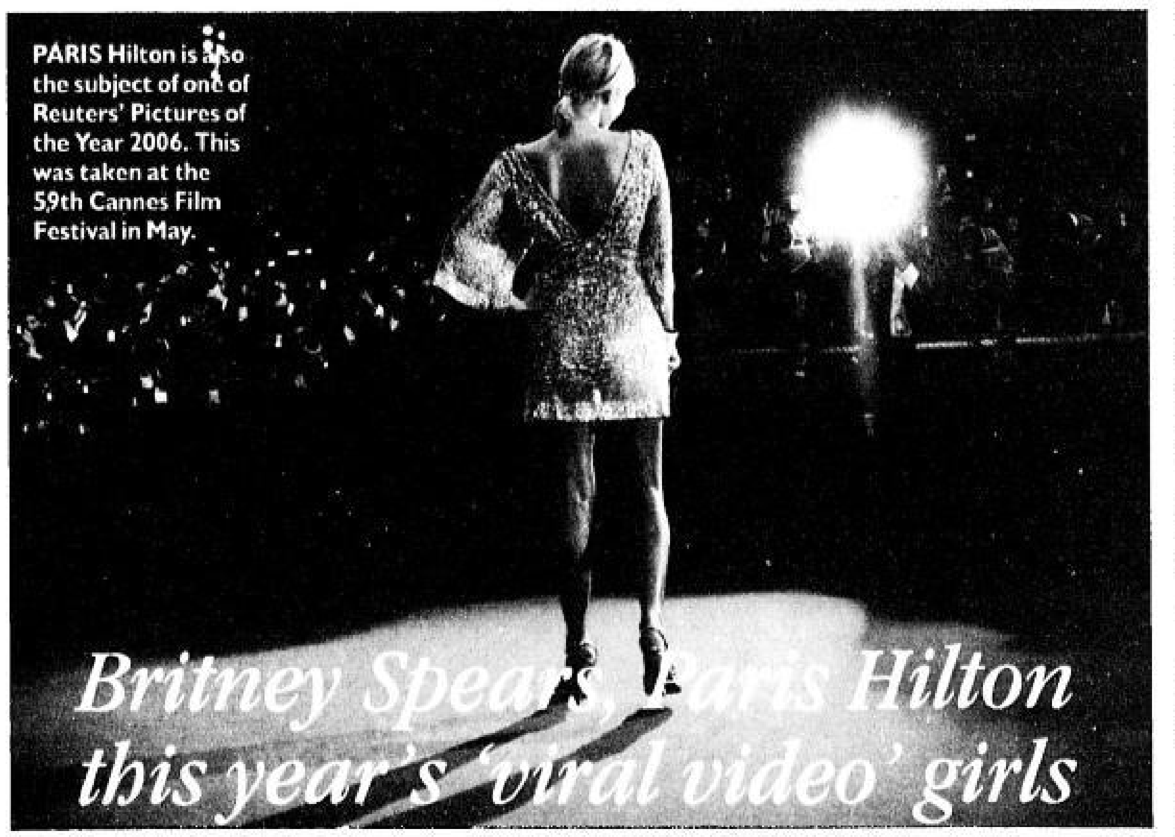


PARIS Hilton is also the subject of one of Reuters' Pictures of the Year 2006. This was taken at the 59th Cannes Film Festival in May.

Britney Spears, Paris Hilton this year's 'viral video' girls

RUSHES

LONDON—THE PUBLIC'S APpetite for those "Oops! ... I Did It Again!" moments involving pop princess Britney Spears shows no sign of waning as she scooped the number one celebrity viral video this year.

A clip of Spears burping and talking incoherently about her belief in time travel was viewed over three million times to take top spot comfortably, said ViralVideoChart.com on Monday.

Live TV footage of Spears' former husband Kevin Federline apparently getting a text message informing him the pop singer had filed for divorce was second with nearly two million hits.

Viral video is the term used to describe clips that gain huge popularity after being posted on the Internet, spreading like viruses through e-mails, blogs and instant messages.

BRITNEY Sears: Top hit online

ViralVideoChart.com says it scans several million blogs a day to see which clips are being talked about most and compiles a daily list of the 20 most-viewed videos.

"Seinfeld" co-star Michael Richards' racist outburst was third in the 2006 chart with over a million hits just four weeks after it was first posted online.

Richards sparked a public outcry for spewing a torrent of racial slurs at hecklers during his stand-up act at the Laugh Factor comedy club in Hollywood on Nov. 17.

The incident was captured in digital camera video footage that was widely circulated on the Internet and was broadcast on TV newscasts three days later.

Actress Lindsay Lohan talking less than generously about socialite Paris Hilton was fourth, while a video of Hilton crashing a Bentley claimed fifth place.

Actress Keira Knightly's rendition of "Raindrops Keep Falling on my Head," played on her teeth, featured on the Ellen DeGeneres Show was number six just ahead of model Katie Price and husband Peter Andre's video for their debut single "A Whole New World."

Hilton makes a reappearance at number eight singing happy birthday to the 80-year-old founder of Playboy magazine, Hugh Hefner, with a video of actress Pamela Anderson at nine.

Sharon Osbourne's tirade at a knickerless Rebecca Loos on Celebrity X-Factor rounds out the chart. *Reuters*

Animated Seinfeld

NEW YORK—Jerry Seinfeld is trying out his animated side in a new film called "Bee Movie," due out in November 2007.

In the film from DreamWorks, he is the voice of a bee who leaves the hive and discovers that humans have been stealing the insects' honey.

The movie co-stars Renee Zellweger, who is the voice of Vanessa, a New York City florist.

JERRY SEINFELD

AP

"I think I'm bringing a different humorous sensibility to an animated movie," Seinfeld, who is also writing and producing the movie, told Newsweek magazine. "There's a lot of attitude in the jokes, the same way it was on the show."

The comedian, who starred in the NBC sitcom "Seinfeld," still does standup and has three children under age 6. He said his home life provides him with tons of new material.

"There's no way to even describe the gold mine in the comedic arts that family life is," he told Newsweek. "I can't believe I missed it for so long. If my life was total misery—which it's not, it's heaven, I love my wife, I'm having a great time—but if it was total misery, it would still be worth it for the jokes." *AP*

YUL Kwon, winner of "Survivor: Cook Islands," and program host Jeff Probst after taping the season finale in LA.

REUTERS

Soft-spoken 'Survivor'

NEW YORK—His former competitors awarded Yul Kwon, "godfather" of the CBS game "Survivor: Cook Islands," with the $1 million top prize in a classic finale that pitted brains vs brawn.

Kwon, a management consultant who was the soft-spoken strategic whiz in the 13th edition of the game, bested Oscar "Ozzy" Lusth, the effortless athlete who dominated physical challenges as the game neared its end.

With the money on the line, it was a 5-4 vote. The finale aired Sunday night.

"It's the first time I've ever felt bad that somebody didn't win," host Jeff Probst said. "It was so evenly matched."

Kwon, a 31-year-old management consultant who lives in San Mateo, California, was the brain with degrees from Stanford University and Yale Law School. He controlled the strategic aspect of the game, particularly after he found a hidden piece of jewelry that guaranteed him one-time immunity from being voted off the island.

"The key to winning the game is maximizing the good luck and minimizing the bad luck," he said later. *AP*

ANOTHER entry in Reuters' Pictures of Year 2006 is this one of model Eva Herzigova, at the world premiere of "The Da Vinci Code," also in Cannes last May.

CHRISTINA Aguilera onstage during her "Back To Basics Tour" concert in Sazka Arena, in Prague, last weekend.

AFP

No takers

LOS ANGELES—Recordings of four songs by a 12-year-old girl who later became Judy Garland did not sell at auction on Sunday when bidders failed to reach the required minimum bid.

The two acetate records have not been heard in public and are believed to be the first made by Garland, who was born Frances Gumm. She shot to fame after starring in "The Wizard of Oz" at age 16 in 1939, and was 47 when she died in 1969 of a prescription drug overdose.

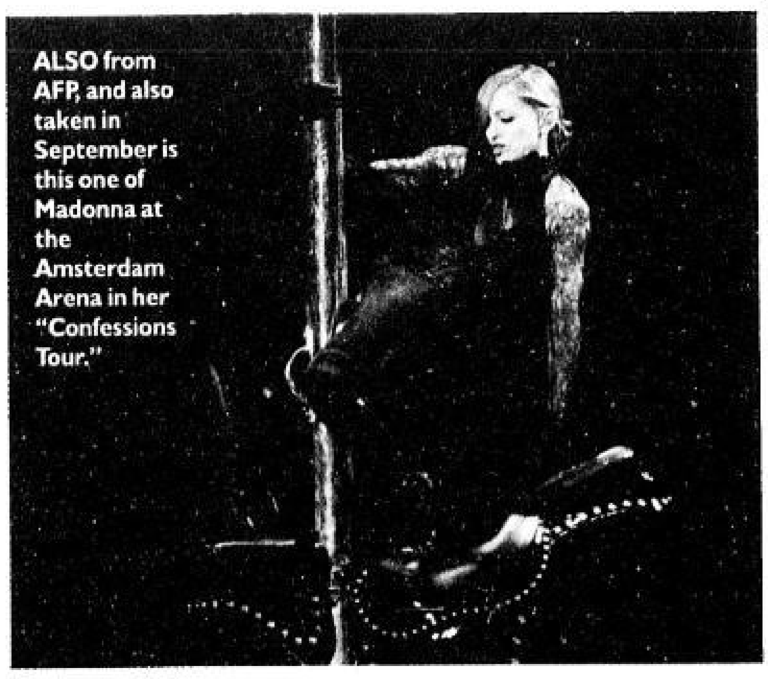
Bidding at Bonhams & Butterfields in Hollywood reached $22,500, which was short of the required minimum. The recordings, including "The Good Ship Lollipop," had been expected to fetch $30,000 to $40,000.

Bonhams & Butterfields spokesperson Levi Morgan said the owner may decide to go to auction again or keep the 1935 records. The woman found the records in 1960 as her family cleared out a Beverly Hills house where Garland once lived. *Reuters*

AUSTRALIAN pop superstar Kylie Minogue, left, performs with her sister Dannii at a concert during Kylie's Showgirl Homecoming tour in Melbourne last Saturday.

REUTERS

BEYONCE, right, during the 3rd Annual "Fashion Rocks" concert at Radio City Music Hall in New York, is one of the most stunning from Agence France Presse this year. It was taken on Sept. 7.



ALSO from AFP, and also taken in September is this one of Madonna at the Amsterdam Arena in her "Confessions Tour."

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Analysts: DiCaprio film may hurt diamond demand

NEW YORK—"BLOOD DIAMOND," the Warner Bros. thriller that hits movie theaters on Friday, could spark public concern about illicit "conflict diamonds" and hurt demand during the key holiday shopping season, analysts said on Monday.

But any financial impact to retailers should be modest and brief, they added.

The film, starring Leonardo DiCaprio, highlights the precious gem's role in Sierra Leone's civil war during the 1990s. So-called conflict diamonds, or blood diamonds, refer to stones mined in war zones and sold illicitly to fund war, insurgencies and human rights abuses.

Star power

James Hurley, an analyst with research firm Telsey Group, said the movie will likely affect sentiment with its star power and advertising push.

But he doubts people will stop buying diamonds, which would hurt retailers such as Zale Corp., Tiffany & Co. Inc., Blue Nile Inc. and Signet Group Plc, which operates the Kay Jewelers chain, and diamond processor De Beers Group, which is 45-percent owned by mining company Anglo American Plc.

"What a diamond means and what it stands for has been ingrained in people's psyches for decades, if not centuries. That's a pretty powerful attachment to ... destroy with just one film," Hurley said.

CL King analyst William Armstrong said the movie would likely alter buying patterns for a small group of shoppers.

> But they figure that any financial impact to retailers should not last long

Bloody trail

"But how much that would be ... I'd be very surprised if it was a material amount," Armstrong said, adding that large retailers already have strict programs in place to prevent or minimize the possibility that their diamonds have left a bloody trail.

To help prepare for a possible public backlash, the World Diamond Council, a trade group, earlier this year hired a crisis public relations firm to design a campaign stressing the industry's efforts at reducing the number of blood diamonds. The campaign included full-page advertisements in national and international newspapers and an educational website, www.diamondfacts.org.

High-end retailer Tiffany, which said it tries to assure the responsible mining of all materials used to make its jewelry, said it

ANALYSTS/ H2

TAKE FIVE

Under the sea with *Isabel Oli*

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit
Contributor

ISABEL OLI SHARES THAT she has a lot of young fans, and that she's a follower of a lot of cartoon series and movies that appeal to them. She even wanted to learn computer animation and related techniques a few years ago, but on her scheduled departure to Singapore where she would pursue a second course, she landed a role in a TV commercial.

Teleserye appearances followed, and eventually, her "dream job" allowed her to be friends with fellow show biz personalities, including current boyfriend Paolo Contis.

Oli now plays Alona, one of several mystery characters in the GMA 7 fantasy series "Atlantika." She finds working with Contis on the same project comfortable, especially now that they're inseparable.

The couple shop, go to church and swim together as often as they can. It's a serious relationship, the 24-year-old actress said, but they have no plans to tie the knot just yet. "Maybe that'll be three or four years from now," she said. "We have to save up for that, and enjoy what we have right now!"

Tell us about the development of your "Atlantika" character Alona.

I'm human for now, but eventually, I'll be having super powers. I don't know who I am yet. But the character has shown that she has

UNDER/ H2

WEEKEND BOX OFFICE

Top 10 movies at the North American box-office for the three-day weekend beginning Dec. 15

The Pursuit of Happyness - Columbia Pictures

TW	LW	Title	Gross	WR
1	☆	The Pursuit of Happyness	$27.0 mln	1
2	☆	Eragon	$23.4 mln	1
3	☆	Charlotte's Web	$12.0 mln	1
4	2	Happy Feet	$8.5 mln	5
5	3	The Holiday	$8.2 mln	2
6	1	Apocalypto	$7.7 mln	2
7	5	Blood Diamond	$6.3 mln	2
8	4	Casino Royale	$5.7 mln	5
9	8	The Nativity Story	$4.7 mln	3
10	7	Unaccompanied Minors	$3.7 mln	2

This Week, Last Week *Weeks in Release*
☆ *New release*
Based on studio estimates compiled on Sunday

REUTERS

Sa Sun, 'di nakaka-tense magtawagan.

"Me, I'm aware of how often I get to talk. For example, when I use Sun, I can talk as many times as I want. When I'm using another network -- even if we're talking -- at the back of my mind, I'm tense."

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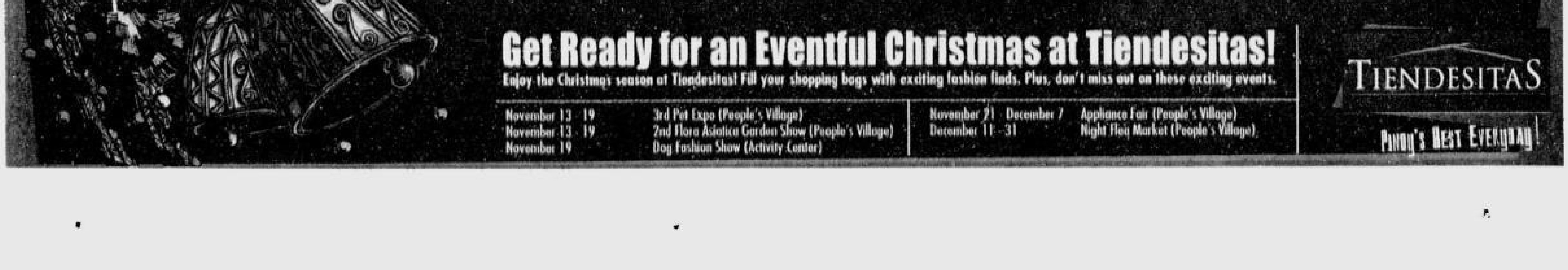

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November 13 - 19 2nd Flora Asiatica Garden Show (People's Village)
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November 21 - December 7 Appliance Fair (People's Village)
December 11 - 31 Night Flea Market (People's Village)

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4 SPIRIT TRAP
5 RESERVED

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3 ZU WARRIOR
4 HUWAG KANG LILINGON

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2 ANG PAMANA
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(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72
1 TENACIOUS - D
2 THE NATIVITY STORY
3 SHAOLIN VS. EEVILDEAD - 2
4 HAPPY FEET
5 SPIRIT TRAP
6 CASINO ROYAL 007
7 INANG YAYA
8 REYNA
9 KAMASUTRA - 3
10 HUWAG KANG LILINGON

Blue Wave
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sto. Niño, Marikina City tel. 9341927
1 THE NATIVITY
2 THE RETURN
3 HAPPY FEET
4 RESERVED

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
tel 7334228
1 SHAOLIN 2 VS. EVIL DEAD
2 TENACIOUS - D
3 MAKAMUNDO
4 THE RETURN
CASINO ROYAL 007 JAMES BOND

MARKETPLACE
Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856
1 FLAG OF OUR FATHER
2 THE BANQUET
3 MAKAMUNDO
4 RESERVED

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274
1 SHAOLIN 2 VS, EVIL DEAD
2 SPIRIT TRAP
3 KAMAZUTRA

Center Mall Cinema
Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue (Baguio City) tel (074)- (4440346)
1 ANG PAMANA
2 PITONG DALAGITA

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 ZU WARRIOR
2 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS
3 THE MARINE
4 INANG YAYA

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 THE MARINE
2 PITONG DALAGITA

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City) tel 687.6963 or 72
1 TENACIOUS D
2 A GOOD YEAR
DECK THE HALLS / CASINO ROYAL
4 HAPPY FEET

CINEMA 2000
Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 FEAST
2 THE MARINE / DECK THE HALLS
3 FLAG OF OUR FATHER
4 RESERVED

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Binan) tel. (049) 4111140
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 HAPPY FEET
4 FLAG OF OUR FATHER

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 BARANG
2 INANG YAYA
CASINO ROYAL 007 JAMES BOND

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 ANG PAMANA
2 THE RETURN
CASINO ROYAL 007 JAMES BOND
4 BORAT

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320
1 HAPPY FEET
2 ANG PAMANA
FLAG OF OUR FATHER / THE MARINE

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan) tel. (044) 4867736
CASINO ROYAL 007 JAMES BOND
2 INANG YAYA

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748
1 MAKAMUNDO
2 FLAG OF OUR FATHERS

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
2 MAKAMUNDO
3 PARAISO SA GUBAT
4 THE COVENANT

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 FEAST
2 DARK DANCERS
3 FLAG OF OUR FATHERS
4 MAKAMUNDO
5 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 MAKAMUNDO
2 HAPPY FEET
3 THE RETURN
4 STEP UP

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 MAKAMUNDO
2 SNAKE ON THE PLANE

MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

LEONARDO DiCaprio in Blood Diamond

DiCaprio film may hurt

encourages consumers to ask jewelers how they support efforts to promote responsible mining.

"The film 'Blood Diamond' serves as a horrific reminder of the terrible costs of uncontrolled diamond trading ... and we are hopeful it will contribute to ongoing international efforts to assure history does not repeat itself," Tiffany told Reuters in an e-mailed statement.

In 2002 diamond production companies and most countries involved in the mining and trade of diamonds agreed on the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, which is a process designed to prevent blood diamonds from entering the mainstream diamond market.

Good job

"The industry has worked hard to keep conflict diamonds from the mainstream markets, including certifying stones as conflict-free," wrote ThinkEquity Partners

Under the sea with Is

From page H1

scales. I hope people will look forward to that development, and what will happen to Ma'am Remedios (Cherry Pie Picache). *Inaapi*. Piranus, Paolo's character, is good to me, but he isn't to others.

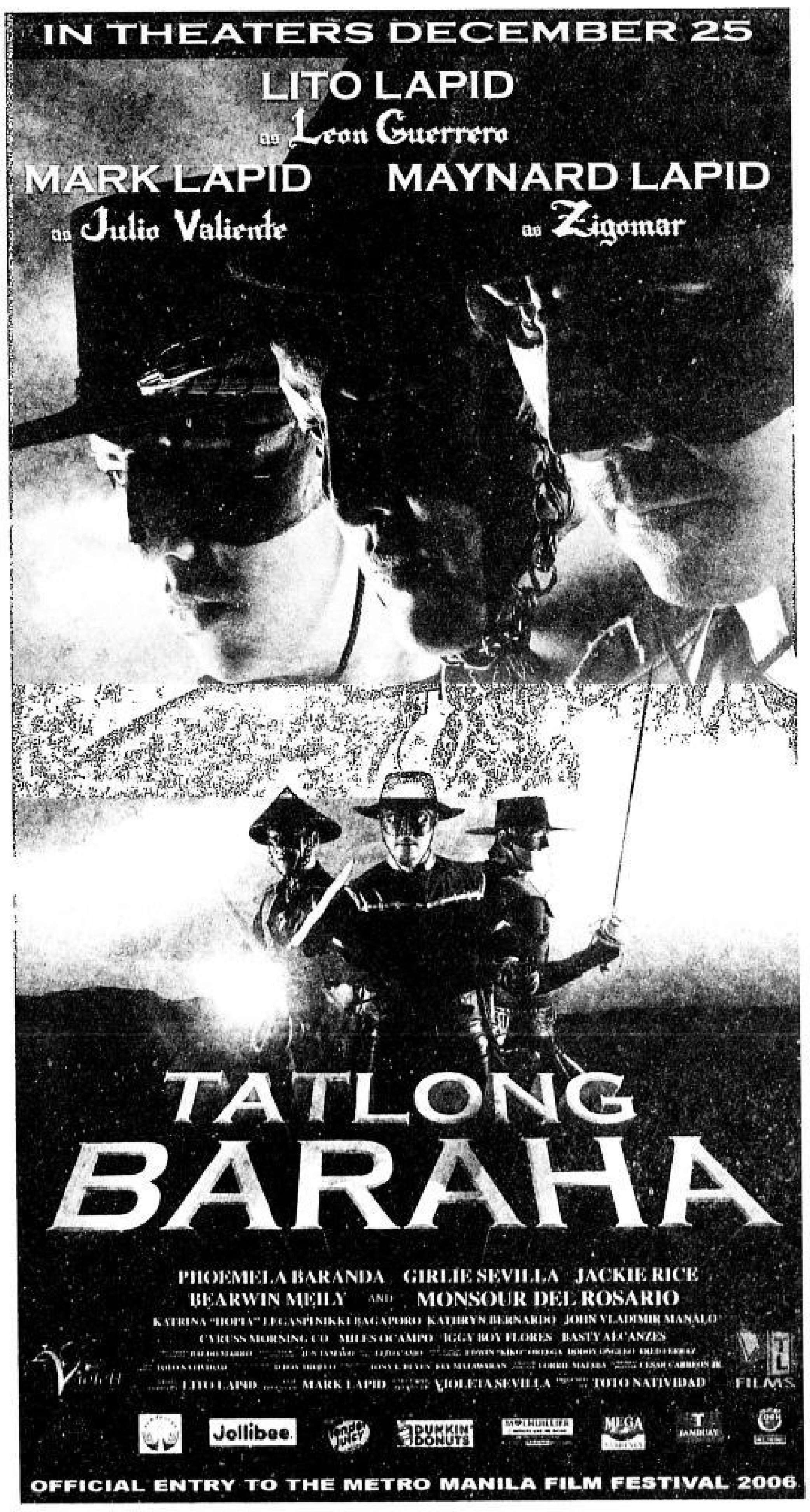
How similar or different is Alona to your previous TV portrayals?

I was in "Sugo," with Richard Gutierrez. I played Alay, love interest to his twin characters. *Aping-api, kinikidnap lagi*. Playing Alona is actually similar, because she's always mistreated. But now, she fights back.

When you were offered the role, were you aware of what they had in store for you?

Actually, when I accepted this role, they told me, "Don't worry, you're a good character here." Other than that, they couldn't tell me more. It's hard; sometimes I feel that I know the character, but I trust the people involved. For me, it's really challenging and fun. The people here are really fun to work with.

MTRCB RATING R-13 Strictly for 13 years of age and up
APPROVED WITHOUT CUT
OFFICIAL ENTRY TO METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2006
OPENS DECEMBER 25, 2006
CESAR MONTANO
SUNSHINE CRUZ CELIA RODRIGUEZ JOHNNY DELGADO
LIGALIG
KATYA SANTOS BAYANI AGBAYANI JOHN REGALA
REBECCA LUSTERIO ROMMEL MONTANO ALVIN ANSON
KALILA AGUILOS & GWEN GARCI
CM FILMS INC.
CESAR MONTANO
CM FILMS INC.

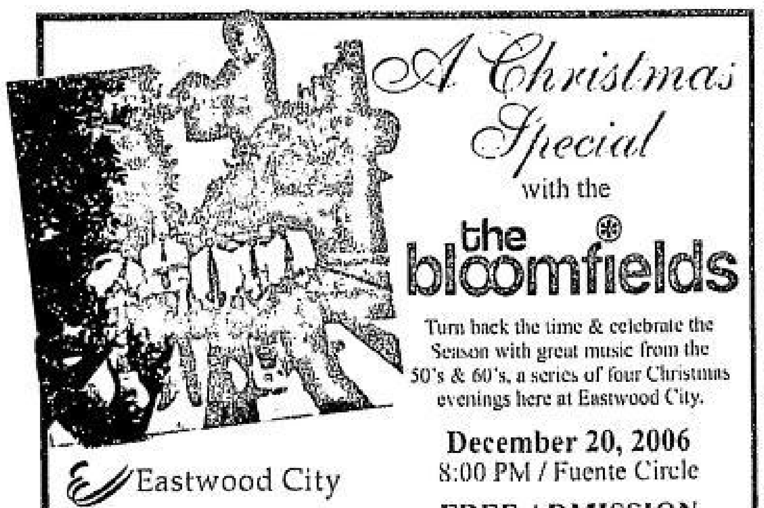

IN THEATERS DECEMBER 25
LITO LAPID as Leon Guerrero
MARK LAPID as Julio Valiente
MAYNARD LAPID as Zigomar
TATLONG BARAHA
PHOEMELA BARANDA GIRLIE SEVILLA JACKIE RICE
BEARWIN MEILY AND MONSOUR DEL ROSARIO
KATRINA "HOPIA" LEGASPI NIKKI BAGAPORO KATHRYN BERNARDO JOHN VLADIMIR MANALO
CYRUSS MORNING CO MILES OCAMPO IGGY BOY FLORES BASTY ALCANZES
LITO LAPID MARK LAPID VIOLETA SEVILLA TOTO NATIVIDAD
OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2006

POWER PLANT CINEMA
Rockwell Center, Makati City

CASINO ROYALE 007 PG13 1:05,4:00,6:55	HAPPY FEET G 1:10,3:30,5:50	A GOOD YEAR PG13 2:30,5:00,7:30
TENACIOUS D IN: THE PICK OF DESTINY 1:50,4:00,6:10	SPIRIT TRAP R13 1:45,3.55 BORAT R18 6:00,8:00	THE NATIVITY STORY PG13 1:20,3:30,5:40,7:50

MOVIES AND SCREENING SCHEDULES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR VERIFICATION CALL

MTRCB RATING G GENERAL PATRONAGE ALL AGES ADMITTED
eragon
OPENS JANUARY 6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the bloomfields
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For inquiries, call:
687-6963
GUARANTEED SEATS
MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

1 TENACIOUS D
1:40, 4:00, 6:20
8:40, 11:00

2 A GOOD YEAR
2:55, 5:40, 8:25, 11:00
PG-13

3 DECK THE HALLS
12:50, 3:10, 5:30
G
CASINO ROYALE
7:50, 11:00
PG-13

4 HAPPY FEET
1:05, 3:35, 6:05, 8:35, 11:00
G

From page H1

analyst Edward Weller to clients. "Though the industry has, we think, done a very good job, the release of this movie could temper overall demand modestly."

The fourth quarter, which includes the holiday shopping season, accounts for the lion's share of the year's sales for jewelry retailers. Telsey Group's Hurley said signs like recent strength in the stock market bode well for strong holiday jewelry sales.

Martinne Geller, Reuters

abel Oli

Do you easily relate with Alona's personality?

I'm not a victim but I'm not really strong. I'm somewhat in the middle. I fight when I have to. It's really difficult to play Alona, because there are underwater scenes. I almost drowned in a Cebu beach resort when I was about 7 years old. I think I passed out after I let go of a *salbabida* and sank. The waves were really strong! But my mom saved me. The trauma's still there, although I've learned to swim. But only at a certain level; *ayoko na ng malalim. Natatakot pa rin ako.*

How has your boyfriend's presence on the same show helped you? How long have you been together?

It's actually weird, and difficult to explain; because we don't have a "monthsary." It just happened. We remember that we first met last November 2005. But we're not together a year yet. *Matagal na ligawan;* to the point that the press won't believe that we're still at that stage back then. I don't want to rush anything, and he understands. Working with him is okay; we worked together in "Sugo." He's supportive, *wala na 'yung nahihiya.* Sometimes, he even teaches me how to do things on-set.

How did the off-screen romance translate to the on-screen pairing?

We weren't told anything, but we feel that the management liked our on-cam and off-cam pairing, maybe because the chemistry is strong. Pao said that as long as it's needed and it helps the story, then it's okay. *Okay lang sa amin.*

How long have you been in the business and what were you doing prior to this?

One year. I took up Information Technology in Cebu. I've lived here for three years already. I was just supposed to visit my brother in Manila. I was about to enroll and go to Singapore for my second course. Then came the SARS scare. So I stayed here. I was a model in Cebu, so I tried that here. After six months, I didn't get any jobs, not even one, *kahit* passerby *lang sa likod, kahit isang* commercial. I said, *ayoko na, sobrang* frustrated *ako.* I wanted to study again and go to Singapore.

So when did it change?

That day, after getting a ticket and saying goodbye to everybody, Max's Fried Chicken called. So I did that ad with Piolo (Pascual). And they asked me to cry. I did, and it helped that I was also feeling disappointed because I didn't do anything for six months. Bum *ako!* After that, ABS-CBN called. I was supposed to be paired with Piolo, but it didn't push through, so they put me in "It Might Be You" instead. After that, I didn't have any performances, and GMA called me up. It's always been my dream to be a model or an *artista.*

What would you be doing if you didn't land in this line of work?

I'd have taken Media Arts in Singapore. It's focused on websites and animation. I really like computers. I don't know how to draw, but I love animation! You can do it on the computer, and I really wanted to study that.

What other opportunities do you want to pursue at this point?

I love singing. There's a plan to launch my own album. No, I haven't recorded it yet. I doubt that it'll happen next year, because we have a play for the GMA management this January. We have workshops almost everyday. I still have "Atlantika," so I won't have time for voice lessons. It's one of my dreams, to have my own album out. I sang on stage in "Atlantika" but my knees were really shaking.

What's the worst thing about being in show biz?

When you have a lot of blessings, some people envy you. *Kapag may mga nang-iintriga sa iyo, dedma.* Just pray about it.

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Meet Nick Naylor, the chief spokesman of the Academy for Tobacco Studies, whose job is to be in favor to smokers and cigarette makers. Usually confronted by conservative lawmakers (who legislates on putting poison labels on every pack), Naylor resets the agenda by devising ways to shut up cancer patients to speak against smoking and by enlisting an A-List Hollywood director to make smoking "cool" in movies. But at the end of the day, the curiosity of his son about his job makes Naylor think another perspective for their future.

WARNING: Watching this movie is not dangerous to your health.

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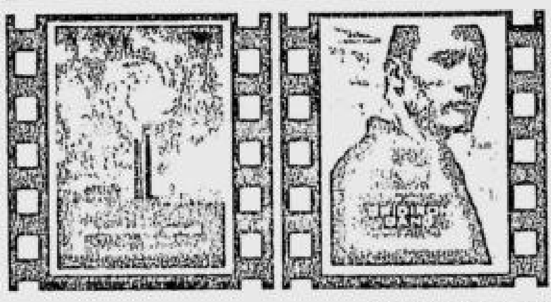

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GRIDIRON GANG

Exclusively at SM Cinema Manila

METRO MANILA

SM MALL OF ASIA 556-0104

IMAX

HAPPY FEET IN 2D

1:00PM 5:50PM

Molinao Fee- P200 Primetime Fee- P250

T-REX IN 3D

10:30AM 11:45AM 3:20PM 4:35PM

CASINO ROYALE
SPIRIT TRAP
SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD
THE RETURN/
THE NATIVITY
BEST MOVIES OF 2006
THANK YOU FOR SMOKING

PREMIERE CINEMA
TENACIOUS D

CENTERSTAGE
HAPPY FEET

CINEMA 1
BEST MOVIES OF 2006

CINEMA 2
RESERVED
633-8976

SM NORTH EDSA 929-5452

1 GRIDIRON GANG
2 BARCELONA
3 HAPPY FEET
4 BEST MOVIES OF 2006
5 THE NATIVITY
6 TENACIOUS D
7 HAPPY FEET
8 SPIRIT TRAP
9 SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD
10 REYNA
11 WAG KANG LILINGON
12 CASINO ROYALE

SM MEGACINEMA 633-1901

1 THE NATIVITY
2 SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD
3 CASINO ROYALE
4 HAPPY FEET
5 TENACIOUS D
6 SPIRIT TRAP
7 THE RETURN
8 AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH
9 BEST MOVIES OF 2006
WAG KANG LILINGON
REYNA
FRAGILE

SM CITY FAIRVIEW 935-0749

THE NATIVITY
REYNA
WAG KANG LILINGON
BEST MOVIES OF 2006
SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD
TENACIOUS D
CASINO ROYALE
HAPPY FEET
THANK YOU FOR SMOKING
SPIRIT TRAP
FRAGILE
INANG YAYA

SM CITY STA. MESA 716-1416

CASINO ROYALE
2 HAPPY FEET
3 SPIRIT TRAP
4 BEST MOVIES OF 2006
5 BARCELONA
6 SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD
7 THE NATIVITY
8 WAG KANG LILINGON
9 REYNA
TENACIOUS D

SM CITY SAN LAZARO 786-2488

HAPPY FEET
BEST MOVIES OF 2006
TENACIOUS D
BARCELONA
THE NATIVITY
WAG KANG LILINGON

SM CITY SOUTHMALL 806-6888

1 THE NATIVITY
2 TENACIOUS D
3 CASINO ROYALE
4 SPIRIT TRAP
5 SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD
6 BEST MOVIES OF 2006
7 HAPPY FEET
8 WAG KANG LILINGON
9 REYNA

SM CITY BICUTAN 776-3055

A GOOD YEAR
SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD
REYNA
BEST MOVIES OF 2006

SM CITY MANILA 523-9240

TENACIOUS D
2 SPIRIT TRAP
3 THE NATIVITY
4 FRAGILE
5 HAPPY FEET
6 CASINO ROYALE
7 SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD
8 GRIDIRON GANG
9 BEST MOVIES OF 2006
10 THE RETURN
11 REYNA
WAG KANG LILINGON

SM CITY DASMARINAS (046)4323201-04

1 MEE-SHEE
2 THE RETURN
3 HAPPY FEET
4 FEAST

SM VALENZUELA 293-3917

1 SANTA CLAUSE 3
2 THE RETURN
3 BEST MOVIES OF 2006
4 FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS

SM CITY SUCAT 829-4975

M.I:III
2 SUPERMAN RETURNS
3 X-MEN 3
4 SUKOB

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1	X-MEN 3 / 11:00-12:45
2	MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 / 12:55-3:00
3	SUPERMAN RETURNS / 3:10-5:45
4	SUKOB / 5:P55-7:35
5	ICE AGE 2 / 7:45-9:15
6	TILL I MET YOU / 9:25-11:05

SM CITY BACOOR (046)417-3868

1 REYNA
2 INANG YAYA
3 HAPPY FEET
4 SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD
5 CASINO ROYALE
6 WAG KANG LILINGON
7 TENACIOUS D
8 DECK THE HALLS

SM CITY CLARK (045)625-5844-45

1 HAPPY FEET
2 FRAGILE
3 THE MARINE
4 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS
5 WAG KANG LILINGON
6 BEST MOVIES OF 2006

SM CITY MARILAO (044)0332013-17

1 HAPPY FEET
2 ANG PAMANA
3 THE RETURN
4 SANTA CLAUSE 3

LUZON

SM CITY BATANGAS 885-6401-04

1 SUPERMAN RETURNS
2 M.I:III
3 SUKOB
4 X-MEN 3

SM CITY PAMPANGA (045)6637681-85

1 THE RETURN
2 CASINO ROYALE
3 THE MARINE
4 INANG YAYA
5 MEE-SHEE
6 BEST MOVIES OF 2006

SM CIY LIPA (043) 756-7925

1 STEP UP
2 HAPPY FEET
3 THE RETURN
4 MEE-SHEE

SM CITY LUCENA (042)7108977-80

1 THE MARINE
2 ANG PAMANA
3 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS
4 FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS

SM CITY BAGUIO (074)6197838-39

1 SANTA CLAUISE 3
2 BOA
3 HAPPY FEET
4 MEE-SHEE

SM SUPERCENTER MOLINO (046)474-3160

1 DECK THE HALLS
2 MEE-SHEE
3 ZU WARRIORS
4 BEST MOVIES OF 2006

SM CITY STA. ROSA (049)5341265-66

1 BEST MOVIES OF 2006
2 FEAST
3 HAPPY FEET
4 FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS

SM CITY CEBU (032)231-3876

1 THE MARINE
2 CASINO ROYALE
3 BEST MOVIES OF 2006
4 THE NATIVITY
5 HAPPY FEET
6 FRAGILE
7 BOA
8 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS

VISAYAS MINDANAO

SM CITY ILOILO (033)3209422

BEST MOVIES OF 2006
2 RESERVED
3 HAPPY FEET
4 ZU WARRIORS
5 THE NATIVITY
6 CASINO ROYALE
7 RESERVED
8 FRAGILE

SM CITY DAVAO (082)2976998

1 MEE-SHEE
2 CASINO ROYALE
3 FRAGILE
4 THE NATIVITY
5 FEAST
6 HAPPY FEET

SM CITY CAGAYAN (088)859-2884

1 SUPERMAN RETURNS
2 SUKOB
3 X-MEN 3
4 ICE AGE 2

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GALLERIA

632-9116

1 CASINO ROYALE • THX
1:00 4:00 7:00 10:00

2 HAPPY FEET
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

3 SA ILALIM NG COGON
12:00 1:50 3:40 5:30 7:20 9:10

4 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00

5 TENACIOUS D
1:30 3:35 5:40 7:45 9:50

6 SPIRIT TRAP
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

7 THE NATIVITY STORY
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

8 REYNA
12:20 2:45 5:10 7:35 10:00

9 BORAT

10 KAMA SUTRA 3
12:00 2:00 4:00 6:00 8:00 10:00

ERMITA

536-7809 to 12

1 TENACIOUS D
12:35 2:50 5:05 7:25 9:50

2 REYNA 12:00 1:50 3:40
THE NATIVITY STORY 6:00 8:00 10:00

3 HAPPY FEET
11:00 1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:50

4 CASINO ROYALE
11:00 1:40 4:20 7:00 9:50

5 SPIRIT TRAP
12:35 2:50 5:05 7:25 9:50

6 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
12:35 2:50 5:05 7:25 9:50

7 KAMA SUTRA 3
12:35 2:50 5:05 7:25 9:50

METRO EAST

682-6193 • 682-8199

1 REYNA
1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00

2 HAPPY FEET
11:05 1:35 4:05 6:35 9:05

3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
11:30 1:55 4:20 6:45 9:10

4 THE NATIVITY STORY
11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:10

5 TENACIOUS D
11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:10

6 SPIRIT TRAP
11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:10

7 CASINO ROYALE
12:30 3:20 6:10 9:00

8 INANG YAYA

NOVALICHES

936-3231 936-3229-30

1 CASINO ROYALE
2 HAPPY FEET
3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
4 REYNA

CITISQUARE MALABON

288-2576

1 ANG PAMANA: THE INHERITANCE
2 REYNA
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER

687-5378

1 TENACIOUS D
2 HAPPY FEET
3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
4 SPIRIT TRAP

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1 CAKE
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3 MY FIRST WEDDING
4 DECK THE HALLS

LIPA

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(043) 312-5870

1 HAPPY FEET
2 THE RETURN
3 THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT 2
4 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS

DASMARINAS

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(046) 416-4332

1 FEAST
2 BARNYARD
3 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS
4 EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

ANGELES

(045) 892-2348

1 THE MARINE
2 ZU WARRIORS
3 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS
4 CAKE

IMUS

(046) 875-3838
(046) 471-8188

1 HAPPY FEET
2 DECK THE HALLS
3 FEAST
4 REYNA

STARMILLS

(045) 876-1927
(045) 961-6270

1 HAPPY FEET
2 MEE-SHEE
3 REYNA
4 THE RETURN
5 FRAGILE
6 THE MARINE

BACOLOD

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(034) 441-0459

1 FRAGILE
2 BARNYARD
3 HAPPY FEET
4 CASINO ROYALE
5 THE NATIVITY STORY
6 MEE-SHEE

ILOILO

(033) 336-8070

1 FRAGILE
2 MEE-SHEE
3 HAPPY FEET
4 THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

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ROUNDUP

Star-studded bazaar

GMA artists Gerard Santos, Angel Locsin, Chynna Ortaleza, Valerie Concepcion and members of the "Starstruck" Final 6 Batch 3 will set up booths at the Sixth Noel Discovery Bazaar and Christmas Shopping Expo 2006 at the World Trade Center from tomorrow till Dec. 23.

Organized by GMA Network and Cut Unlimited, the bazaar will also have live performances and auction, with Ryza Cenon, Mike Tan, Mark Herras, Jackie Rice and Jana Roxas on Dec. 21 and Gerard Santos, Aicelle Santos, Rhian Ramos, Sheena Halili and Jennylyn Mercado on Dec. 23.

For kids, there will be puppet shows and storytelling sessions, an art contest and art camp led by the Art Rizal Group.

The beneficiary organizations are the GMA Kapuso Foundation's Give-A-Gift Alay sa Batang Pinoy, the Bantayog ng mga Bayani Foundation and the Associate Missionaries of Assumption Foundation.

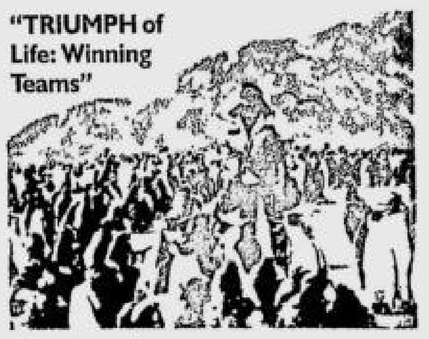
Critics' choice

"Little Miss Sunshine," Fox Searchlight's road comedy about a dysfunctional American family, recently won three awards from the New York Film Critics—Best Ensemble Cast, Best Debut as Director and one of the Ten Best Films of 2006.

The Los Angeles Film Critics gave the film scriptwriter Michael Arndt and co-directors Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris the New Generation Award.

The film is now showing in local theaters.

THE CAST of "Little Miss Sunshine"


"TRIUMPH of Life: Winning Teams"

'Winning Teams'

The National Geographic Channel airs "Triumph of Life: Winning Teams" on Dec. 25 at 4 p.m. and Dec. 31 at 7 p.m.

In the ancient battle for life, animals that work in teams have become the most powerful on the planet. The show reveals the evolutionary forces that created these teams, and uncovers the secrets of social success.

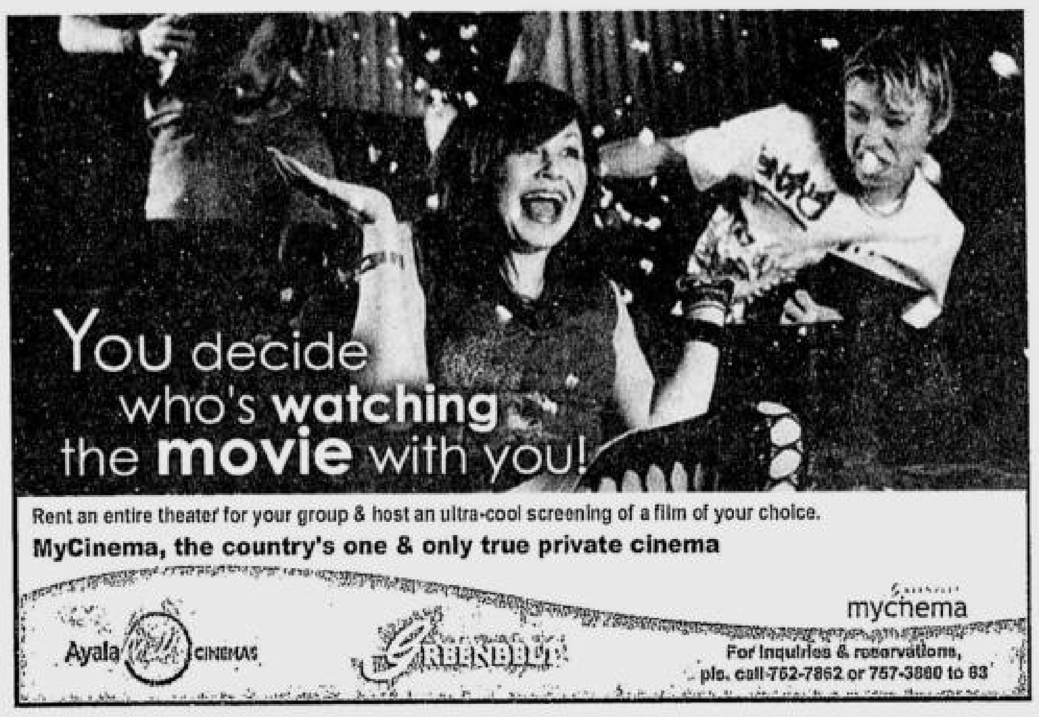
Guam Christmas

Tonight's episode of "Probe" tackles the Pinoy Christmas in Guam, signaled by a lantern lighting ceremony.

The designs of lanterns that come all the way from San Fernando, Pampanga.

Also to be featured is Alexander Lacson, author of "Twelve Little Things Filipinos Can Do To Help Our Country."

The episode airs at 11 p.m., right after "Bandila" on ABS-CBN 2.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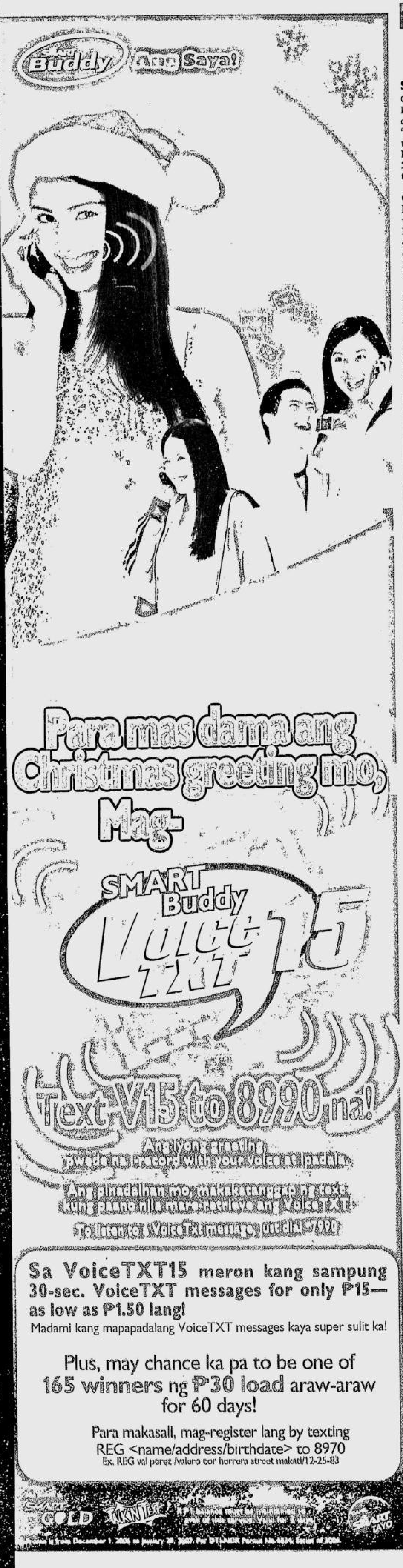
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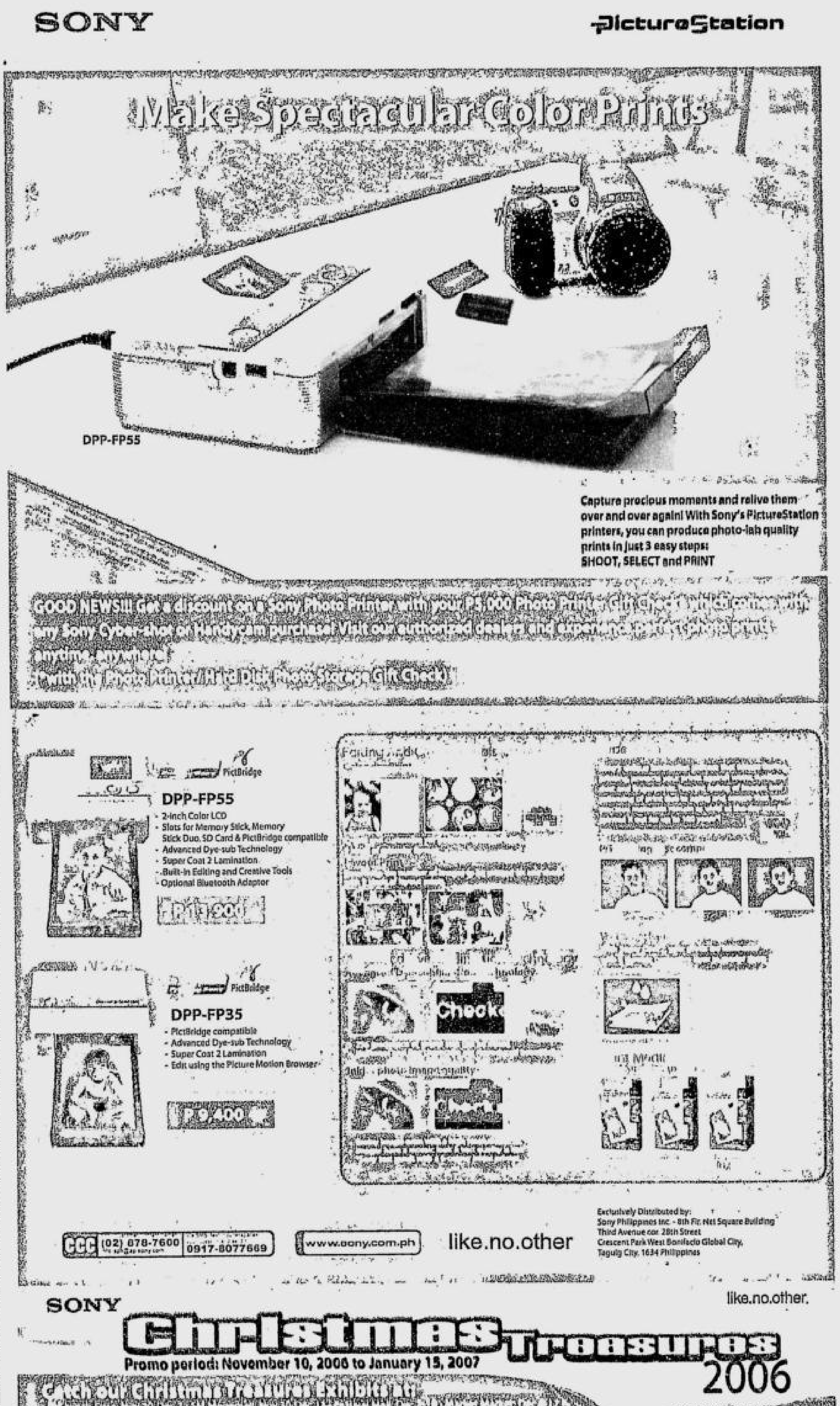
Promo is from December 1, 2006 to January 29, 2007. Per DTI-NCR Permit No. [illegible], Series of 2006.



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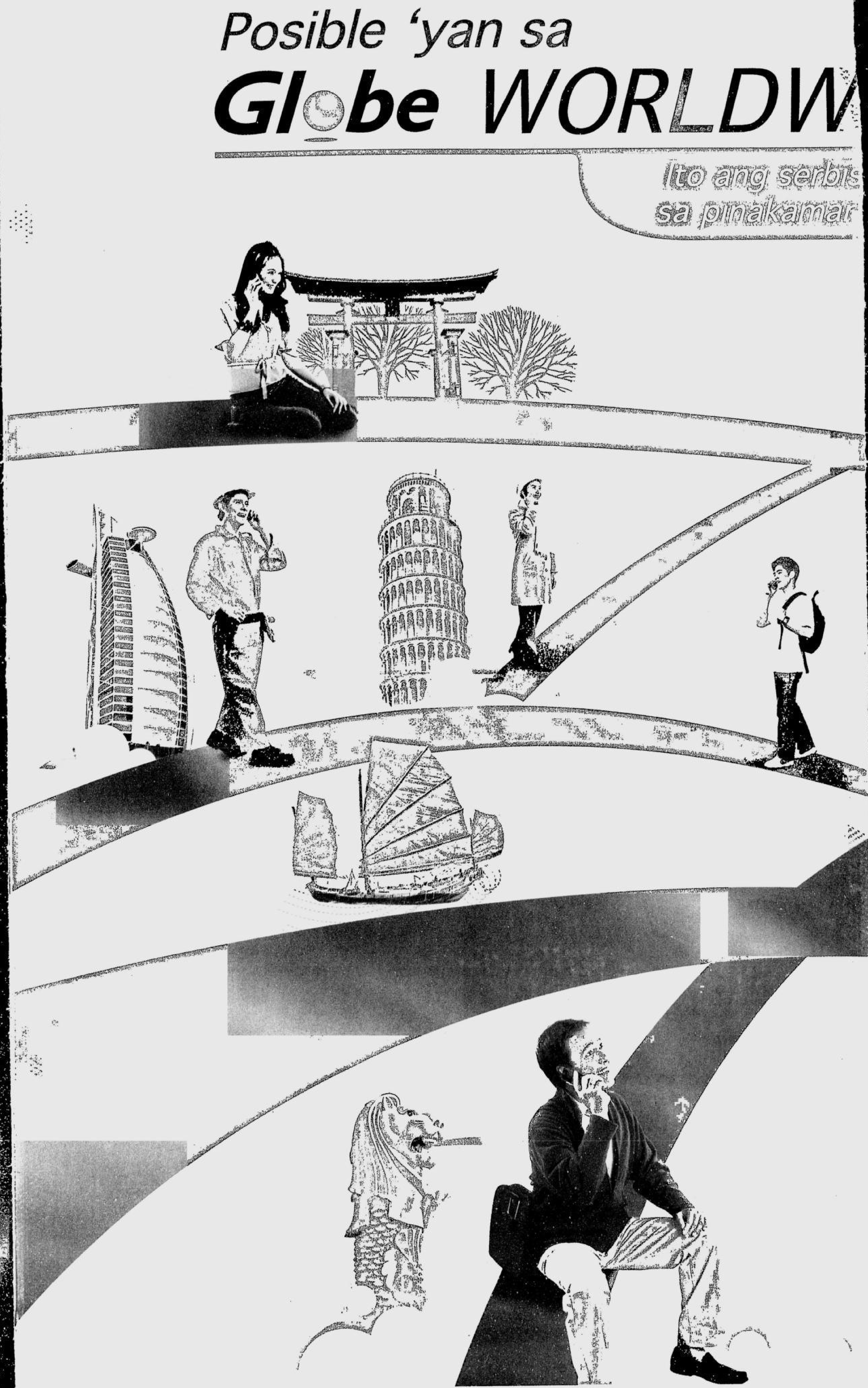
gusto ko laging maabot
ang mga mahal ko.”

3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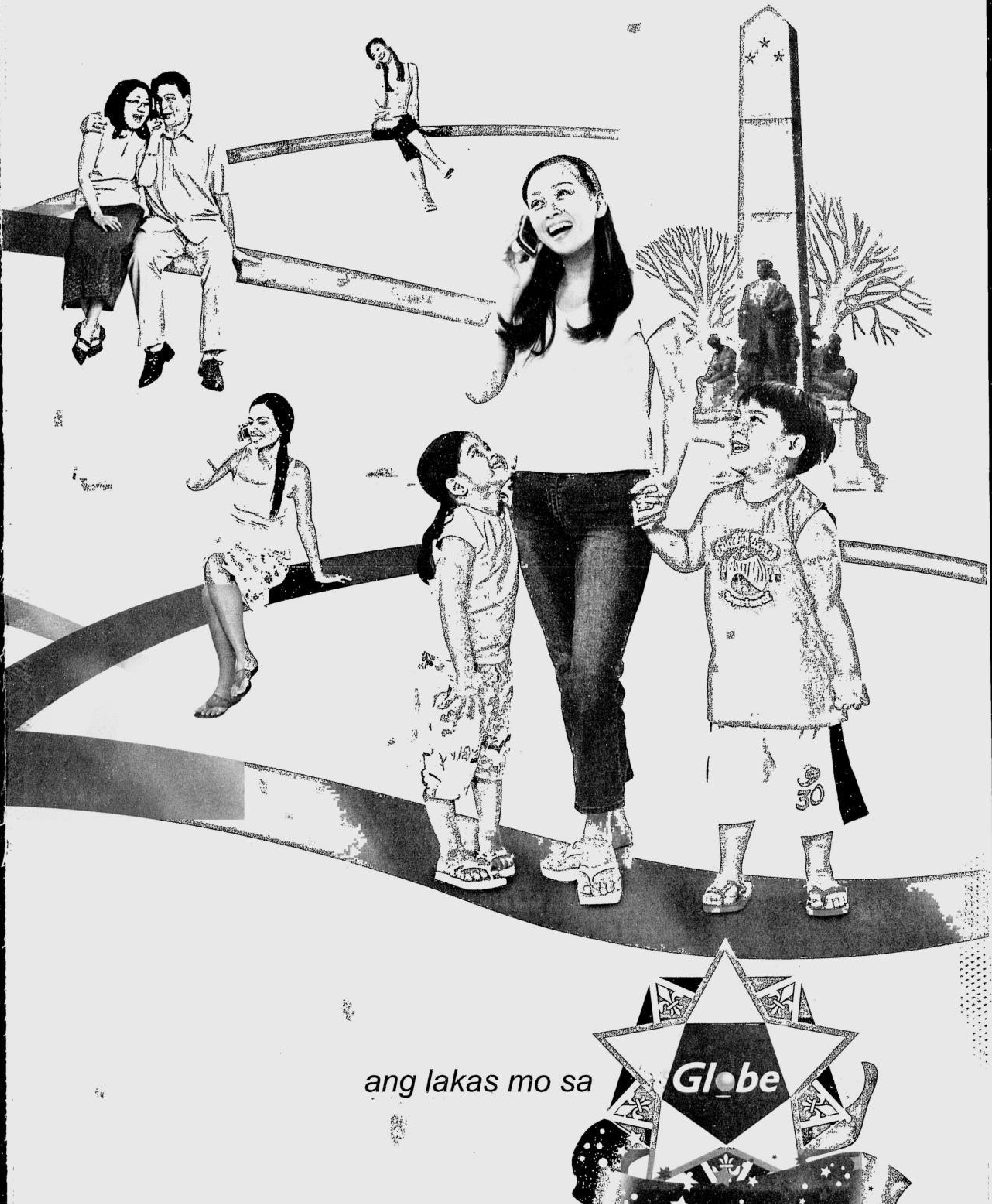

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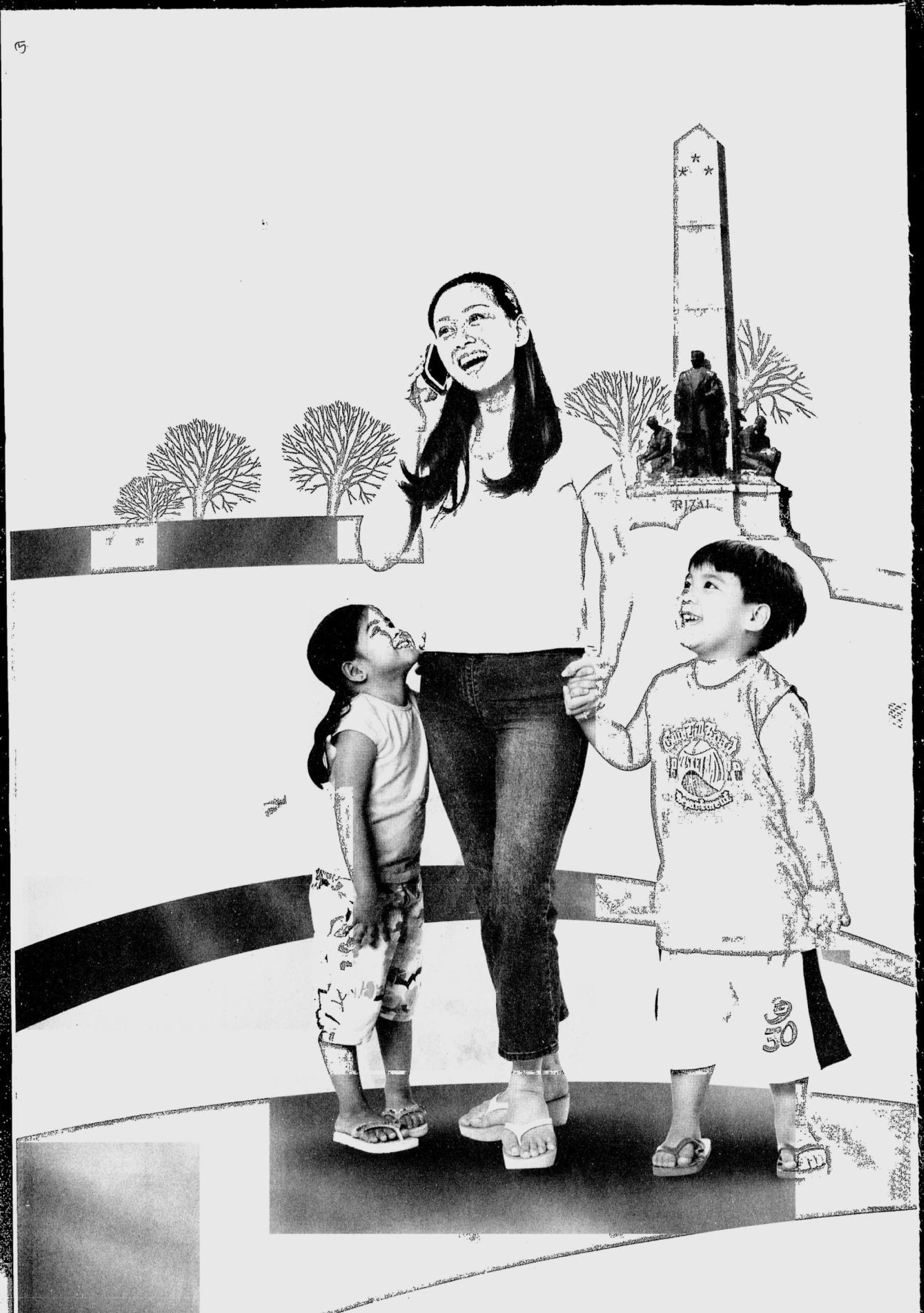
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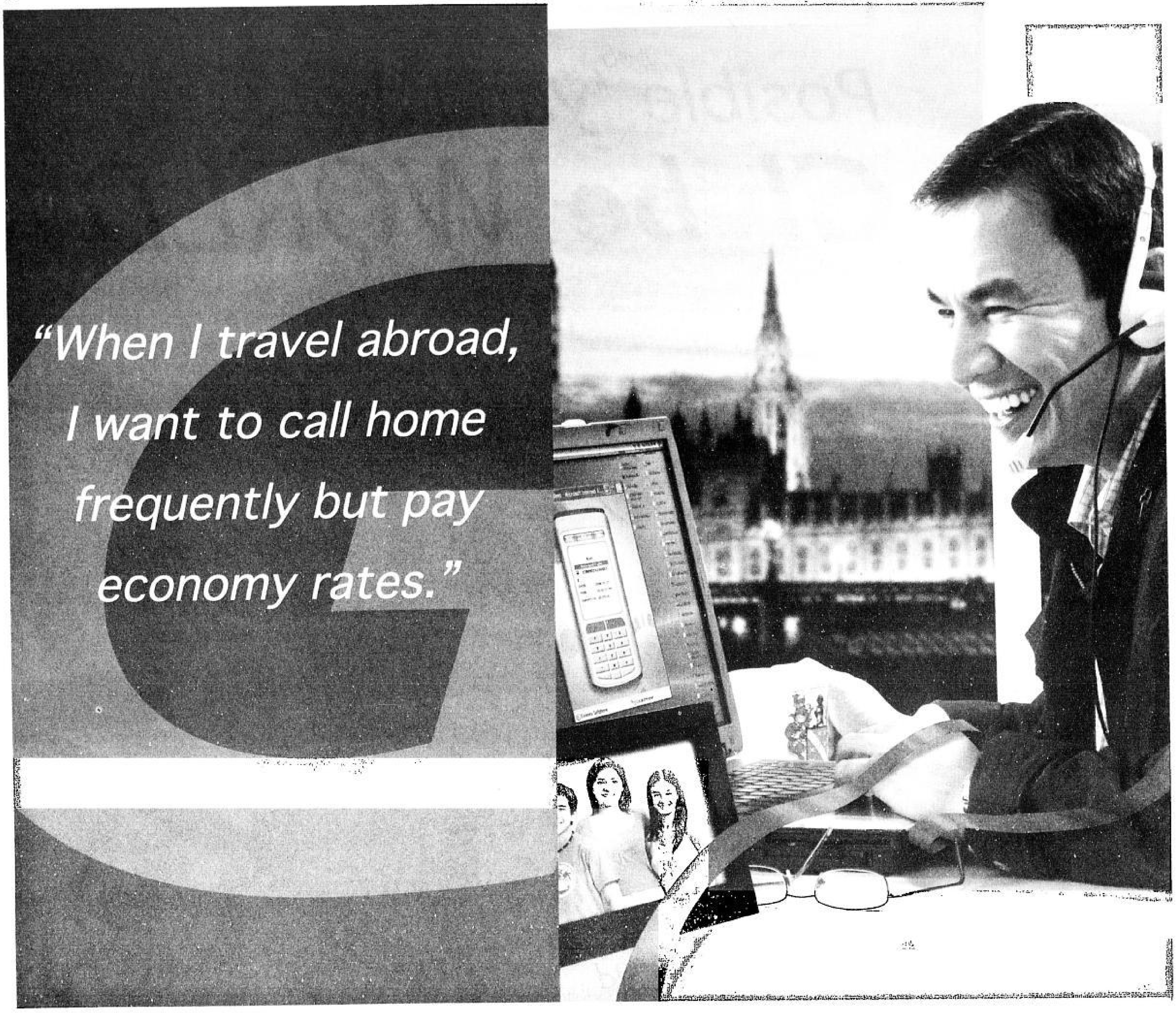
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